



August 2002

Vol. 23 Number 2

Toll-free numbers help firefighters respond quickly

Making a connection between fire departments and railway crossings

At first, many would think that there isn't much of a connection between fire departments and railway crossings. However, when you consider the variety of calls that fire departments receive, and the fact that in many communities, the railway runs through the town, village or city, there is a real need for a connection between these two entities.

In fact, for years fire departments and railway companies have shared a working relationship focused on fire prevention and suppression. Two separate railway companies, Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and Canadian National (CN), plus several short lines, run across the province.

Thanks to all firefighters...

On behalf of all Albertans, the Fire Commissioner's Office recognizes and thanks firefighters who have worked long hours to keep this province safe this past spring and summer. Extremely dry conditions have meant more grass and wildland-urban fires and demonstrated the value and reliability of Alberta's fire service. We know that many of you have sacrificed your holidays and time with loved ones to protect our communities from fire. Your efforts are appreciated!



According to Graham Dallas, communications director with CN, "through our CN Police, we've been having regular discussion with fire departments for years." Similarly CPR has been working with fire departments through its Safe Passage Program to keep lines of communication open. "We work extensively with local fire departments on emergency preparedness training," said Darcie Park, Communications Representative for CPR, "specifically as it relates to dangerous goods incidents on the railway."

The applicable toll-free 1-800, 24-hour emergency assistance hotline number is shared with all fire departments and truly benefits fire departments in their ability to respond quickly to emergency calls. Fire departments enroute to a fire can call the hotline and connect with the communications centre, that then contacts the network management centre, which is in constant radio and phone contact with train crews. This enables the rail company to halt train service

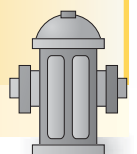
when necessary. For example, the railway cuts through the middle of the Town of Okotoks, making it necessary for train service to be halted when the fire department is responding to an emergency call. Rob MacKenzie, deputy fire chief for Okotoks, says that they've used the 1-800 number several times. "It's really worked out well. CPR's ability to stop the train so we can quickly cross the tracks to get to a fire or other emergency call has been a huge help."

The 1-800 number is also posted at all railway signals and sign posts. This enables pedestrians, cyclists and

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Making a connection between fire departments and railway crossings

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motorists who notice a problem, such as malfunctioning or damaged signals and crossings, or come across an emergency situation, to quickly notify the railway.

The 1-800 hotline is just one aspect of the effective working relationship between fire departments and both railway organizations. As a matter of routine, both CN and CPR regularly communicate about operations with the police and fire departments located along their respective railway lines. As well, both organizations have firefighting crews on hand to extinguish any brush fires when doing track work that emits sparks.

The Canadian Pacific Railways (CPR) Safe Passage program number is 1-800-716-9132 and the number for Canadian National Railway (CN) is 1-800-465-9239.

CPR has posted its number on all of its railway signals and signposts. The number has also been distributed on yellow, weatherproof stickers to fire and police departments. CN's 1-800 number is included on visor cards that were provided to fire and police departments, and it is also posted at all grade crossings.

In addition to helping fire departments respond quickly to emergency calls, the 1-800 number is also a big benefit to the railway companies, says Dallas. "We recognize that fire and/or police are often the first responders, and they are often first on the scene in the event of a derailment. We work with them as a coordinated team."


NOTE: each crossing has a unique identifier that must be conveyed through the 1-800 number so that the centre can pinpoint where this crossing is and then contact the train crew crossing that specific point on the line. 



Province-wide by 2004

Warning system expands

On May 6, 2002, Alberta's Emergency Public Warning System (EPWS) was expanded to include the Red Deer area. As Alberta Municipal Affairs Minister Guy Boutilier announced, "bringing Red Deer on board is a big step in expanding the EPWS system province-wide."

As part of the expansion efforts, all Edmonton and Calgary broadcasters participating in the system also received equipment upgrades to improve their ability to broadcast public warnings. Further expansion to province-wide service will be phased in over the next two years at no cost to municipalities or broadcasters. Drumheller, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Lloydminster, Medicine Hat and Peace River will gain access to the system by 2004. 



Dignitaries collaborate on cutting the cake at the official launch of Alberta's Emergency Public Warning System in the Red Deer Region. From left to right: Wainwright MLA Doug Griffiths, Stettler Mayor Keith Ryder, Red Deer County Reeve Gregg Johnson, Red Deer-North MLA Mary Anne Jablonski, Red Deer Mayor Gail Surkan, and Alberta Minister of Municipal Affairs Guy Boutilier.

A few facts about EPWS:

- Alberta's Emergency Public Warning System (EPWS) was developed following the 1987 Edmonton tornado and has been fully operational in the Edmonton and Calgary areas since 1995.
- The EPWS is the only system in North America that gives local governments the ability to broadcast emergency warnings quickly and directly to radio, cable and television stations. Flood forecast staff from Environment Canada and Alberta Environment are also able to broadcast warnings.
- Alberta's EPWS is unique in Canada as a voluntary partnership between government and private and public broadcasters.
- With the addition of the Red Deer area, the EPWS is now available to all Albertans living in the central corridor of the province—a total of 192 municipalities, including First Nations communities.
- To date, the EPWS has been activated six times—five times by Environment Canada to warn of extreme weather conditions and once by the Town of Drayton Valley when it suspected a possible contamination of its municipal water supply.

Additional information is available on the Disaster Services' web site: www.gov.ab.ca/ma/ds

Changing the way of doing business... continued!


Last issue we told you about some of the changes that were taking place at the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO). Further to that, here's the latest on how Fire Commissioner Pat Graham is evolving his office to best benefit the fire service across Alberta.

Increasing the profile of the FCO, both within the fire service community and within government, is an ongoing initiative. The new dress code for FCO staff is already making an impact as staff wear their vests with the new FCO logo to meetings and other events. Fire safety officer vehicles are also now marked with a large decal that displays the new FCO logo, making them more easily identifiable to the public. "While these are simple visual enhancements, they are a great starting point towards increased visibility and awareness of the office," said Graham.

"We're also doing a number of things that either enhance the services provided or positively impact the fire service," added Graham. For example, the new electronic reporting system will enable fire incident reporting via web-based technology. (See SIDEBAR for more information about the new electronic reporting system)

As part of its internal reorganization, the FCO has also initiated an operational plan for assistance and advisory support for the Alberta Fire Services. As of May 30, 2002, a new phone number exists for **after-hours emergency assistance**. Callers dialing 1-877-427-8393 will be given the most efficient and effective access to FCO personnel.

As well, the reference library is being moved. "When we heard that the library was being reorganized, we moved to quickly have all the fire-related reference materials housed in our office," added

Graham. While the Fire Commissioner's Office has always had an open door policy, Graham is hoping that more and more fire service personnel will be encouraged to stop by, make use of the materials and get to know the staff. "The coffee's always on, and we look forward to seeing you here!" 



Fire Electronic Reporting System expands capabilities

The new Fire Electronic Reporting System (FERS) being created for the Fire Commissioner's Office is going to make a number of improvements in collecting and sharing fire incident statistics.

Since the beginning of fire incident reporting in Alberta, the fire incident report has always been provided as a paper or hard copy version. When the report came to the FCO, it was checked manually then entered into a database for subsequent analysis. However, the expanding use of computer technology and the Internet enables the FCO to not only realize efficiencies but to also improve capabilities and services related to fire statistics. Working with FUJITSU Consulting (formerly DMR Consulting), the FCO is creating an efficient data base that enables the submission of fire incident reports electronically as well as other enhancements to the Fire Statistics Information System.

According to Assistant Fire Commissioner Mahendra Wijayasinghe, "the new system will be a tremendous improvement on the previous system as it is being built to meet the needs of reporting personnel." More information about the new system will be provided to fire departments in the near future, but here's a quick glimpse at what's in store.

Benefits of the new system include:

- Easy data entry, and ability to submit fire reports electronically
- Online data validation that will detect incompatible codes before submitting reports to the FCO
- One-time data entry, meaning that data is only entered once (previously each fire incident report was created via hard copy and then later entered into a computer)

The new system will also contain the Fire Statistics Reporting Manual. The manual will appear as "look-up tables" that will enable users to easily pick the codes required to describe a fire incident. These codes will then be automatically recorded in the electronic form.

To make use of this new technology, fire departments require an Internet service provider to access the "MileNet," Government of Alberta web site, which is where FERS will be located. Registered users will be issued a security password to enable them access to FERS.

Another parallel development that will be reflected in FERS is the revision of the Fire Statistics Reporting Manual. Recent revisions to the Canadian Coding Structure for Fire Statistics Reporting by the Council of Canadian Fire Marshals and Fire Commissioners will be included within the system.

NOTE: Fire departments wishing to continue reporting fires using the paper forms will be supplied with the new edition of the Fire Statistics Reporting Manual and new fire incident forms (fire reports, occupant reports, casualty reports and smoke detector/alarm reports).



Focusing on Redcliff Fire Department

While much of the province was having unseasonably cold weather (including snow!) this spring, the Redcliff Fire Department had a very different problem on its hands. A major windstorm two miles west of Suffield caused a 10-vehicle pile-up, requiring emergency response from several fire departments. While fire department personnel at CFB Suffield were the first responders, the Redcliff Fire Department was quickly called in to assist. "It was probably one of the biggest incidents that we've responded to," said Ken Schmidt, Redcliff fire chief. "We couldn't see anything, so we were really expecting the worst." Four people died as a result of the collision, and several people sustained injuries; some were treated on the spot while others were transported to hospitals in Medicine Hat and Brooks.

Redcliff is located five kilometres west of Medicine Hat and 300 kilometres southeast of Calgary. The Redcliff Fire Department is sustained by 20 volunteers. Schmidt is paid

part-time as the department's fire chief. Schmidt himself started out as a volunteer firefighter and over the years he rose to the position of deputy fire chief before becoming fire chief eight years ago.

The majority of Schmidt's training was through the Alberta Fire Training School (AFTS). "I took just about every course," he said. As fire chief, Schmidt also believes strongly in training for his volunteers.

"We have practices twice a month, on the first and third Monday from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. We also bring in instructors for courses, averaging about two courses a year for our members."

Schmidt indicates that the fire department averages between 60 and 70 incidents per year, with half of them being motor vehicle

collisions. With the "hot" location, one would expect numerous grass or wildland fires, but Schmidt says they are fortunate that there aren't too many in his jurisdiction. "The town's close proximity to the City of Medicine Hat may have been a factor," said Schmidt. "While we didn't issue any fire bans, the County of Cypress did, and I think that had an impact on grass fires for our jurisdiction too."

While the Redcliff Fire Department doesn't operate an ambulance service, many of its members are trained as Emergency Medical Technicians and Emergency Medical Responders. "Our ambulance service is provided through Medicine Hat, but we often go and assist paramedics on their calls," adds Schmidt.

The fire department's jurisdiction covers more than 1500 square kilometres. The east and south




Redcliff Fire Department in action.

boundaries are the South Saskatchewan River, the north boundary is the British Block and the western boundary is one mile past the small farming community of Bowell. Included within the jurisdiction is the Town of Redcliff, a community of 4,500 residents, with about another 2,000 to 3,000 residents in the County of Cypress.

The Redcliff fire hall received an addition about four years ago, and it now includes two deep bays that can each contain three trucks. Equipment includes a municipal district pumper, a town pumper, a rescue vehicle that is fully equipped with the "Jaws of Life" and a rapid intervention vehicle, which is mainly used for highway collisions but also has prairie fire capabilities.

In addition to responding to calls, Schmidt says the fire department also promotes fire safety throughout the year. "Alex Symington, our fire prevention officer, regularly takes kids on tours through the fire hall," said Schmidt, "and we get involved with the McDonald's Fire Prevention Week activities. During that week our members also go around town knocking on doors to check smoke alarms and batteries."

"I'm very fortunate to have such an excellent and stable crew of volunteers," stated Schmidt. "Together we are able to provide the fire prevention and protection services that our community needs." 

Greenhouse capital of the prairies

Deriving its name from the red shale cliffs overlooking the South Saskatchewan River, the Town of Redcliff is known as the "Greenhouse Capital of the Prairies." The long hours of sunlight, inexpensive natural gas and close proximity to the TransCanada Highway have resulted in the largest concentration of commercial greenhouses in western Canada. In fact, there are more than 50 acres of greenhouse operations under glass or plastic. Cucumbers are the most predominant crop, although tomatoes, peppers and flowers are also grown in abundance.



Fires in student residences

Housing of students attending schools, colleges, universities and other academic institutions may range from dormitories, sorority and fraternity houses and halls of residence. Although no fatalities have occurred in these facilities in Alberta, the potential exists for significant loss of life from fires in these student residences.

The purpose of this article is to present a summary of fire losses in student residences associated with academic institutions in Alberta, from an analysis of fire incidents reported to the Fire Statistics Information System (FSIS) of the Fire Commissioner's Office. The report does not cover fire losses in properties such as private rental arrangements that house students. A second, but more important, reason for this report is to stimulate discussion and action needed to enhance and maintain the present levels of fire safety in student residences. Similar efforts have been undertaken by the U.S. Fire Administration and the National Fire Protection Association in recent years in the United States where an average of 1,700 such fires occur annually and a number of students have been killed (www.usfa.fema.gov).

Table 1 presents the fire losses in student residences in Alberta during the 10-year period 1991-2000. On average, there were six fires with an annual direct property damage estimated at \$12,400. The majority (92%) of these fires occurred in dormitories.

Property class	Fires	%	Deaths	Injuries	Property loss
Dormitory – Unclassified	30	53	0	3	256,824
Dormitory – School/college/university	22	39	0	0	868,368
Dormitory – convent/monastery	4	7	0	0	13,200
Fraternity/sorority/social club	1	2	0	0	100,000
Total	57	100	0	3	1,238,392

Causes

The leading cause (40%) of student residence fires is incendiary—arson (29%) and vandalism (11%), with cooking (14%), smoking (11%) and appliances (11%) ranking second, third and fourth (Figure 1). In contrast, cooking (26%) is the leading cause of home fires followed by smoking (11%) and heating (10%).

Materials most commonly ignited in student residence fires were: clothing and fabrics (17%), paper (15%), bedding/mattress/pillow (12%), furniture (6%), cooking oil/fat (5%) and electric insulation (5%). See back cover for graph.

Distribution of student residence fires by month, Alberta: 2001

Table 2

Month	% of Fires	Month	% of Fires	Month	% of Fires	Month	% of Fires
Jan	12	Feb	19	Mar	2	Apr	7
May	12	June	5	Jul	9	Aug	7
Sep	9	Oct	5	Nov	5	Dec	7

When fires start

Table 2 presents the incidence of student residence fires by month. Most fires happen during February, followed by January and May. These patterns differ from those reported in the U.S., where the fire incidence declines significantly during periods when academic institutions are not in session. Student residence fires in Alberta fluctuate throughout the week (Sunday (11%), Monday (16%), Tuesday (14%), Wednesday (12%), Thursday (5%), Friday (19%), and Saturday (23%)).

Smoke alarm performance

Smoke alarms were installed in 72% of the residences that experienced fires. This installation rate is high compared to Alberta homes since the responsibility for installation rests with the institution. Of the installed smoke alarms, 44% activated, 27% did not activate, and in 29%, activation status is unknown. The major reason for no alarm activation in student residences was not enough smoke (45%), while in Alberta homes it was a lack of a power source (35%)—dead or missing batteries.

Some examples of student residence fires in the U.S.

(source: www.collegefiresafety.org)

Smoking and alcohol

Shortly before dawn on October 21, 1994, five occupants of a fraternity house in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, died after a smoldering sofa—believed safe and moved to the porch re-ignited and set the building ablaze.

A cigarette ignited the couch. Batteries had been removed from smoke alarms in the house, a common practice during smoky parties. Autopsy results showed four of the students had alcohol in their blood and two had traces of cocaine and marijuana in their systems.

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Fires in student residences

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Less than six years later, also at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, fire swept through another fraternity, killing three students. Autopsies again determined that alcohol was a contributing factor. Alcohol abuse plays a deadly role in many college fire deaths.

Candles

On February 25, 1997, a candle ignited a wall tapestry in a university dormitory in Newport, Rhode Island. The fire destroyed one room and caused about \$200,000 damage. All 200 students who lived in the dorm evacuated when the alarm went off, and no one was injured.

At Michigan State University, a student looked up from prayer to find a candle had set his stereo on fire. At Yale University, an unattended menorah gutted a suite (as students, jaded by false alarms, refused to leave the building until ordered by police).

Halogen torchiere lights

During a power failure in a dormitory at the University of Massachusetts, a student hung wet clothing over a torchiere lamp to dry. When power was restored, the light ignited the clothing.

When a student at Hendrix College in Arkansas left her room briefly, her halogen lamp ignited sheets from an upper bunk bed and started a fire that caused \$400,000 damage to the dormitory.

Disabled fire alarm

Firefighters, battling a working fire at a Washington State University fraternity, were stunned to find a resident attempting to silence the building's alarm system. His excuse?

He wanted to get some sleep. Students smoking or cooking in rooms regularly disable alarms so nearly 10% fail to signal dorm blazes. Even when alarms work, students accustomed to false alarms ignore real danger. Cooking in dorm rooms accounts for about 18% of dorm fires.

Conclusions

Student residences need to be fire safe environments. Deliberate firesetting—arson and vandalism—is the number one cause of fires in student residences in the U.S. and in Alberta. Research in the U.S. indicates that motives for firesetting include peer pressure, mischief, a cry for help, and struggling with the pressures of the academic environment. The next common causes of fires include cooking, appliances, smoking, electrical, clothes dryers and candles. These are also the common causes of Alberta home fires, although their ranking is different.

Fire safety in off-campus properties is also of concern as these are not under the control of the academic institution. These facilities may also not be as regulated as campus housing facilities. Any fires in these properties recorded in the FSIS do not show the connection to an academic institution. These students are some of the hardest ones to reach with a fire safety message. Students living in formal residences are relatively accessible and usually go through some type of mandatory orientation, while those in off-campus housing may not be accessible or have such orientation.

A number of factors that are related to the frequency and severity of student residence fires can be identified from studies in the U.S.:

- Student apathy is prevalent. Many are unaware that fire is a risk or threat in the environment. Misuse of cooking appliances, overloaded electrical circuits and extension cords and use of candles increase the risk of fires.
- The beginning of the fall semester was identified as the best time to reach the students with fire safety messages because students are new to the environment and are the most receptive to receiving new information.
- Students need to be informed about the types of equipment and practices that are not permitted in residences.

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An Alberta perspective

According to Ray Richards, Acting Director, Office of Environmental Health & Safety, the University of Alberta has very specific prevention activities in place regarding student residences. "We combine education, training and inspection activities to deliver a comprehensive fire safety program in our student residences," said Richards. "All of our buildings, including each residence building has a fire warden system. In fact, campus wide, we have over 600 trained fire/emergency wardens that assist with evacuation procedures."

The wardens are trained annually and undergo a fire exit drill twice a year, in September and January. There is also hands-on fire extinguisher training for all wardens.

As part of the University of Alberta's Emergency Master Plan, there is also an Emergency Action Plan in place for the residences on campus. As well, all residences receive semi-annual fire inspections and any renovations or new construction is also reviewed for code compliance. "Our code review process includes site inspections and testing and acceptance of all life safety systems," said Richards. "An occupancy permit is issued only after our office is satisfied that all life safety systems are operational."



What's in a label?



















Standing in front of a store display featuring many household products, you notice that some products have a ULC mark while others carry a CSA mark. You start to wonder what this mark means, and whether it affects the quality of the product. More importantly, should this influence your decision of which product to buy?

Federal and provincial legislation mandate that equipment be certified by an accredited agency and that the product must bear evidence that it has been tested to Canadian standards. "In Alberta, section 2 of the Electrical Code Regulation prescribes the conditions for the use of equipment related to electrical systems and applies these requirements to the term "approved" as referenced in the code. Section 2 of the Electrical Code Regulation reads as follows:

- 2 (1) No person shall manufacture, install, sell or offer for sale any equipment related to electrical systems for use in Alberta unless it has been
- (a) certified by a certification organization accredited by the Standards Council of Canada, or
 - (b) inspected, tested and accepted by a certification organization accredited by the Standards Council of Canada, and the equipment bears evidence of having been accepted in a manner authorized by the certification organization.

CSA and ULC testing products

Both CSA (Canadian Standards Association) and ULC (Underwriters' Laboratories Canada) are indications that the product has been tested to Canadian national standards. These two marks are probably the most widely recognized, however, the Standards Council of Canada has accredited a number of agencies with different scopes and the provincial government has recognized several of these agencies (see chart for details about the seven organizations and their marks).

Name of Certification Organization	Certification Marks	
CSA International	  	The CSA certification mark alone without any identifier indicates products approved to Canadian National Standards. If another country's identifier is present (i.e., US, NRTL), then the small 'c' Canadian identifier is required to indicate that the product also complies to Canadian National Standards.
	 	The 'Blue Flame' certification mark is a Canada only mark indicating compliance to Canadian National Standards. They do not require a small 'c' Canadian identifier.
Entela	 	The entela certification mark requires the small 'c' Canadian identifier at the 8 o'clock position to indicate compliance to Canadian National Standards. Identifiers for other countries may be present but in all cases, the small 'c' is required.
	 	The ETL certification mark requires the small 'c' Canadian identifier to indicate compliance to Canadian National Standards. Identifiers for other countries may be present but in all cases, the small 'c' is required.
Intertek Testing Services		The WH certification mark is an accepted Canadian mark indicating compliance to Canadian National Standards. It does not require a small 'c' Canadian identifier.
		ITS however, is introducing the small 'c' Canadian identifier at the 8 o'clock position to indicate compliance to Canadian National Standards. If another country's identifier is present (i.e., US, NRTL), then the small 'c' Canadian identifier at the 8 o'clock position is required to indicate that the product also complies to Canadian National Standards.
		
Met Laboratories		The MET certification mark requires the small 'c' Canadian identifier to indicate compliance to Canadian National Standards. Identifiers for other countries may be present but in all cases, the small 'c' is required.
Quality Auditing Institute		The QAI certification mark requires the small 'c' Canadian identifier to indicate compliance to Canadian National Standards. Identifiers for other countries may be present but in all cases, the small 'c' is required.
TÜV Rheinland of North America		The TUV certification mark requires the small 'c' Canadian identifier to indicate compliance to Canadian National Standards. Identifiers for other countries may be present but in all cases, the small 'c' is required.
Underwriters' Laboratories	 	The UL certification mark requires the small 'c' Canadian identifier to indicate compliance to Canadian National Standards. Identifiers for other countries may be present but in all cases, the small 'c' is required.
		The ULC certification mark is a Canada only mark indicating compliance to Canadian National Standards. It does not require a small 'c' Canadian identifier.

CSA and ULC are not-for-profit organizations that write standards and test products to Canadian standards. They both act as third parties invited by a product developer or buyer to test the standardization of a product.

According to Gary Boswell, Senior Engineer, CSA Edmonton, once a CSA standard is published, various governments may choose to reference these standards in legislation, making it mandatory to build or manufacture products to these standards.

"These standards are used as the basis for testing the product," said Boswell. "If the product passes the testing, it is eligible to be marked with the CSA certification mark. The certification mark provides confidence to the regulator authorities and consumers that the product complies with the applicable standards."

While both CSA and ULC test a wide and diverse range of electrical products, ULC is also involved in writing standards and testing the products related to the fire and

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What's in a label?

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security industries. According to Brian Murphy, Standards Manager, UL Canada, "we provide thorough and unbiased product evaluation for thousands of consumer, commercial and industrial products where their use has a bearing on accident hazard, fire prevention, fire protection, life and electrical safety." Their testing and certification services involve a wide variety of consumer products such as smoke detec-

tors, carbon monoxide (CO) detectors, fire extinguishers, factory-built fireplaces, burglar alarm systems, life jackets and electrical lighting products. "Whenever I'm talking to consumers," says Murphy, "I tell them to 'look for the label' since the label is the only evidence provided to identify products that meet recognized Canadian national standards."

The bottom line...

Regardless of the product you are buying, be sure that it includes the label from one of the agencies accredited by the Standards Council of Canada. That way, you are assured that the product has been tested to Canadian standards. 🔥

The following web sites provide additional information about product testing, the range of products that are tested by each organization as well as product recalls and other information:

www.csa-international.org www.ulc.ca
www.gov.ab.ca/ma www.scc.ca

See the ULC's summer newsletter at www.ul.com/auth/tca/summer02/news.html for more useful information.

Promoting fire safety

Southern Alberta Family Safety Day event a huge success

Fire departments from across southern Alberta have much to be proud of, especially the success of the first Family Safety Day event they organized. On June 1, 2002, families from many southern Alberta communities gathered at the Lethbridge Exhibition Grounds for a full day of free fun, food and education.

Special guests included MLAs, the Alberta Fire Commissioner, Lethbridge's new Fire Chief Brian Cornforth, Major Glen Habkirk of the Salvation Army, Alderman Leslie Vaala from the City of Lethbridge as well as singer/songwriter Mary Lambert, who is producing safety messages and songs for Fire Prevention Canada.

"The purpose of the event was to bring together emergency service providers and their families from across southern Alberta as well as share safety messages with other Albertans," said Paul Little, fire prevention officer with the City of Lethbridge Fire Department and a Family Safety Day committee member. "We wanted to promote and maintain the camaraderie and service of our emergency service providers and continue to educate southern Albertans about fire and other safety concerns."



Lethbridge's Ken Mercer prepares to demonstrate the step/step attack method.

A wide range of activities was organized for the steady stream of participants. The day began with a parade that included horses, Sparky the Fire Dog, winners of the safety poster contest, singer/songwriter Mary Lambert plus police, fire and rescue vehicles, including some antique models. Opening ceremonies also included presentations to winners of the safety poster contest, as well as winners of the fire chief for a day, police chief for a day, CFCN weather person for a day, and Caring for the Community and Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) contests. As well, there was a DARE basketball tournament followed by a diverse range of displays and demonstrations.



Sparky and some fans.

"The entire day was organized by emergency safety providers from various communities in southern Alberta," added Little. "It was a totally southern Alberta event, with everyone showing off and promoting their community. Judging by the crowds and the smiles on people's faces, it was a great event." 🔥



Exploring the duties of an insurance adjuster

What does an insurance adjuster do? Why is this person trampling all over my fire scene? Who is responsible for protecting evidence collected at the scene? How can the adjuster help the fire department in a fire investigation? These are just some of the many questions that fire personnel ask when the insurance adjuster shows up.

When a fire loss occurs at an insured property, the insurance company has the contractual right and obligation to investigate the events surrounding the loss and to assist in documenting the damages to the structure and contents. The statutory conditions of the property policy state:

“Entry, Control, Abandonment – After loss or damage to insured property, the Insurer has an immediate right of access and entry by accredited agents sufficient to enable them to survey and examine the property, and to make an estimate of the loss or damage, and, after the Insured has secured the property, a further right of access and entry sufficient to enable them to make appraisal or particular estimate of the loss or damage, but the Insurer is not entitled to the control or possession of the insured property, and without the consent of the Insurer there can be no abandonment to it of insured property.”

Unfortunately, many adjusters take this statutory condition to allow them unrestricted access to the fire scene. This cannot be further from the truth. The fire scene is under the direct control of the fire department until such time as it has completed its investigation and relinquished control of the scene to the owner of the property. Before the adjuster attends the fire scene he or she should contact the fire department and obtain the necessary approvals. This contact also allows for the adjuster to “interview” the fire department. By working together, the fire department and the adjuster can establish a true picture of the loss. It can also be very beneficial to both parties. Because insurers are trying to determine the cause of loss, adjusters may be able to provide for testing of suspicious objects, such as toasters, coffee makers, hot air poppers, electrical systems, etcetera. This is a tremendous benefit to fire departments who are already under significant financial constraints.

Adjusters are trained interviewers. Some adjusters are very good at this skill while others need further practice, but in many cases the adjuster is a better interviewer than the rural fire investigator. The statutory conditions of the property policy require that the insured must provide the

insurer with written notice, “...stating when and how the loss occurred, and if caused by fire or explosion due to ignition, how the fire or explosion originated, so far as the insured knows, or believes.” The insured is also required to:


- show ownership of property
- provide a list of both damaged and undamaged property
- provide this information by way of a statutory declaration under penalty of fraud for falsification of information.

In obtaining this information from the insured, the adjuster also has the opportunity to interview the insured more than once to determine the necessary information. As many fire investigators know, people are not required to speak to them, so co-operation between the fire department and the insurance adjuster is truly a benefit to both parties.

It is important to know and understand that statutory conditions are applicable to both property and automobile losses in Alberta. Under the automobile policy, the statutory condition is as follows:

“Examination of Insured – The Insured shall submit to examination under oath, and shall produce for examination, at such reasonable place and time as is designated by the Insurer or its representative, all documents in his possession or control that relate to the matters in question; and he shall permit extracts and copies thereof to be made.”

When adjusters do not approach the fire department for permission to attend and conduct an investigation of the fire scene, the fire department should contact the adjuster and inform him or her of the proper procedures in conducting an investigation in conjunction with the fire department.

Most fires are accidental, yet many intentionally set fires are made to look accidental. The adjuster is responding under the policy, and is under pressure from many sources to investigate quickly and make payment quickly. It is important that a thorough investigation of all fire losses is completed and that a factual, scientific determination of the fire’s origin and cause is reached. Working together as a team, the adjuster and the fire department can accomplish this goal. 

Article written by Bob Zifkin, Alberta Fire News Editorial Board member and a representative of the insurance industry in Alberta. He is currently employed as a Loss Prevention Officer and Risk Manager with the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties insurance division, Jubilee Insurance Agencies Limited.



Literacy and safety—what do they have in common?

Considerable time, money and effort are spent trying to educate the public about fire safety and fire prevention. Getting your messages out should be enough, right? But have you considered whether your messages are reaching your intended audiences? Are your audiences able to understand the messages? Do they know how the messages impact them?

These were some of the questions discussed at the April teleconference coordinated by the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research (ACICR). According to Jennifer Drozdowski, Community Development Manager with ACICR, literacy is more than just being able to read. Literacy is the ability to understand and use printed information in daily activities at home, at work and in the community. Statistics from an international adult literacy survey conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) showed that huge numbers of adults in **developed** countries have low literacy skills that prevent their full participation in society and the economy and, **more than one in three Albertans aged 16 and over have serious problems with literacy.**

Poor readers are:

- at a higher risk for injury for a number of reasons
- less likely to understand, clarify, question or ask for instructions
- more likely to be working in higher risk environments

Literacy is defined as much more than a reading or learning issue. In fact, it is many issues rolled into one—it is a social issue, a health and safety issue, a criminal justice and crime prevention issue, an employment issue, as well as an issue for seniors, youth and the disabled.

Despite the fact that there is such a low literacy level for many Albertans and Canadians, written information is the main avenue of communication for many of our safety messages. For example, the

proper installation of smoke alarms and communication about Fire Prevention Week messages and activities depend primarily on written information.

As a result, it is very important to create materials that are easy to understand and interpret. Or, as Drozdowski indicated in the title to her teleconference, *Make Health and Safety Messages User-Friendly through Clear Language and Design.*

The layout and design (overall appearance), organization of material, language used, sentence length and structure and the tone of writing all have an impact on the reader's ability to understand and interpret the information. To make your safety messages easy to understand, keep in mind the following tips:

- use language that communicates, clearly, concisely and effectively
- organize and present information so that it makes sense to most people
- use words and expressions that are familiar
- present information in logical order using a straightforward style (plain language)
- use short words and sentences, simple illustrations and common words


One way to ensure that your messages are aimed at your audiences is to first learn as much as you can about the people you are trying to reach. Consider consulting with your target audience to develop your

messages, based on what they want and need to know. Perhaps most important of all, test your health and safety messages with a sample target audience. Ask them, “what makes material hard to read and understand?”

Five steps to making your messages and materials reader friendly:

- Step 1 - plan the content and format
- Step 2 - involve your readers
- Step 3 - write in clear language
- Step 4 - review, test and revise
- Step 5 - plan the layout and design

When creating your messages/materials, keep in mind the following points to AVOID:

- too much information
- heavy blocks of type, too many type styles or type that is too small
- no pictures or illustrations
- poor titles, organization, copy quality, spacing, colour/contrast
- competing elements
- complex, unfamiliar, formal language
- acronyms (e.g. AFTS), jargon, idioms (such as “the pot calling the kettle black”) or technical, legal or medical terms
- long or complicated sentence structure
- negative or bossy tone
- “never,” “always,” or too many “shoulds” and “shouldn'ts” 

For more information about this topic, contact Jennifer Drozdowski, Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research (ACICR) at (403) 382-7199.

The teleconference series

The Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research hosts monthly teleconferences for injury control stakeholders 10 times per year. The teleconferences run on the second Wednesday of every month from September through June from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. MST.

The teleconference series arose from an identified need to network and share information among people working in the field of injury prevention and community development across the province. The conferences provide an excellent avenue for keeping stakeholders up-to-date on current issues and provide valuable information in a very time- and cost-effective manner. There are generally one or two speakers per session. Speakers have an allotted amount of time to present information (approximately 20 minutes) and then field questions and comments from the participants.

For more information about the monthly teleconferences contact Jennifer Callum, Education Coordinator, ACICR at (780) 492-9768 or by e-mail at jcallum@ualberta.ca. Or, check out the ACICR web site at www.med.ualberta.ca/acicr



This article is the second in a series of articles about fireplay and firesetting in children and teens. The first article ran in our May 2002 edition.

Ending juvenile firesetting through prevention and intervention

Fireplay and firesetting by children and teens is a very costly, and sometimes deadly behaviour. Obviously, preventing this behaviour is very important, especially for fire service professionals, who often deal with the tragic outcomes of this preventable behaviour. When fire departments are planning their prevention programs, they really need to be thinking at two levels. The first level involves providing programs that will **encourage parents** to prevent their children's access to fire-starting materials and providing programs that **discourage children** from playing with matches and lighters.

Programs designed to make parents aware of the dangers of matches and lighters may include media campaigns, public fire safety displays and/or special events hosted by fire departments. These efforts are very important as research has shown that the majority of children who become involved with fireplay or firesetting get their fire-starting materials from home. Most often, school-based programs are used to teach children about fire safety and the dangerousness of fire, although special events and public displays may also be used to convey this message.

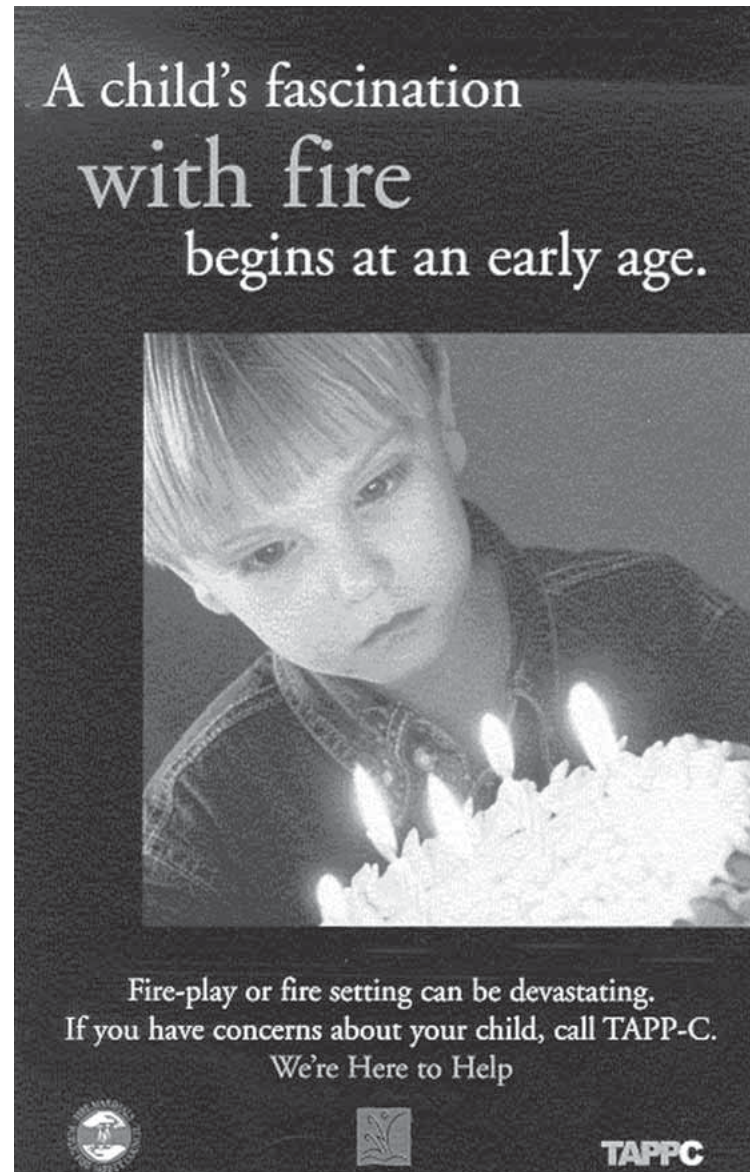
For the majority of children, these educational efforts seem to be enough to prevent them from playing with matches and lighters. For other children, however, due to learning, behavioural or family difficulties, these educational strategies are not enough to prevent fireplay or firesetting. For these children, additional education may be needed to help them learn about the dangerousness of fire. Parents who catch their children playing with matches or lighters usually provide consequences and education that lead their child to stop their fire involvement. Some children, however, continue to play with fire even

after their parents have intervened, and may even escalate to more serious types of fire involvement. These children need the second level of programming, which involves more comprehensive intervention. This is usually where juvenile firesetting prevention/intervention programs come in.

Fire departments across North America offer a range of these programs. Some involve fire service professionals providing tours of the fire hall, home safety checks, fire safety education, counseling, and/or referrals to other services in the community. The Arson Prevention Program for Children (TAPP-C) is an Ontario program for children and teens who have been involved with fire in any one of a number of ways, including playing with matches or lighters, burning paper or garbage, doing lighter "tricks," intentionally setting fire to buildings, and making bombs. It is a collaborative program that involves fire service and mental health professionals working together to ensure that all children involved with fire have access to the best care possible and that they and their family have the best chance possible for a safe and healthy future. TAPP-C's model of service delivery provides children and


their families with access to a home safety check and fire safety education through the fire department, as well as risk assessment and brief intervention through children's mental health centres.

...continued on next page



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



Ending juvenile firesetting through prevention and intervention

...continued from previous page

TAPP-C uses this model for a number of reasons. First, fire service professionals have a wealth of expertise in dealing with juvenile firesetters and in evaluating home safety, helping improve home fire safety, teaching fire safety knowledge and skills, and providing positive role models. Second, children's mental health professionals have training and expertise in conducting assessments and helping children and families deal with difficult behaviour. Sometimes it comes as a surprise to fire service professionals that TAPP-C offers all children both services. Often people wonder whether it is necessary to offer all children and teens assessment and intervention by children's mental health professionals, especially when children's mental health services may already seem overloaded and have lengthy wait lists. These are good questions.

The experiences of TAPP-C professionals, combined with information from other juvenile firesetting programs, offer lots of support for the importance of including children's mental health professionals in this model. There is plenty of evidence that firesetting by children can be an indication that there are other problems in the child's life. There is also plenty of evidence to show that firesetting is not an easy behaviour to eliminate. As well, there is lots of research to show that predicting risk, that is, whether someone will go on to engage in a particular behaviour again, is complicated.

By the time parents are calling and asking for help with their children, they have likely tried their usual strategies for addressing misbehaviour, and they have not


What can fire departments do to prevent juvenile firesetting?

- Aim comprehensive education programs at adults about the importance of keeping matches and lighters away from children (preferably locked away)
- Aim comprehensive fire safety education programs at children and teens that specifically address what to do if you find matches and lighters and what to do if you see someone playing with matches and lighters

What can fire departments do to respond to juvenile firesetting?

- Have a plan—don't wait until there is a problem in your community to make a plan
- Make sure all staff know the plan—consider specialized training in dealing with juvenile firesetters and their families
- Make sure your plan includes improving the fire safety of the child's home—homes where there is a firesetter are at higher risk for having a fire, and smoke alarms and escape plans are often missing
- Make sure your plan includes age appropriate fire safety education
- Know the phone number of your local children's mental health services
- Arrange for a local children's mental health professional to speak to staff about the services that are available. It is important that any misconceptions are eliminated—all children deserve the chance to access help and fire service professionals have an important role in letting families know that help is available for dealing with behaviour problems in children

been effective. In fact, based on TAPP-C's database, children and teens have, on average, been involved with fireplay or firesetting numerous times by the time they are referred to the program. As a result, it is very important to offer services from professionals who have expertise in conducting risk assessments and who specialize in helping parents deal with misbehaviour by children and teens. The TAPP-C recommended practice for fire service professionals, whether a community has a TAPP-C program or not, is to provide information about local children's mental health services to all families, so that every family has the opportunity to access those services.

The best chance we have of ensuring that children stay safe from fire is by ensuring that we meet as many of our children's needs as possible. Overlooking important factors can mean the difference between life and death. 

This article was submitted by:

Joanna Henderson, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate
Sherri MacKay, Ph.D., C.Psych.
TAPP-C: The Arson Prevention Program for Children, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (affiliated with the University of Toronto)



Putting the spotlight on fire safety officers

In the May 2002 issue of Alberta Fire News, we mentioned the transfer of six staff from the Safety Services Branch of Alberta Municipal Affairs to the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO). This issue, we're highlighting two of the new fire safety officer staff, and we will highlight two more with each issue.



Ed Pomerleau

Ed Pomerleau joined the Department of Labour in 1978 as a Fire Prevention Officer in the Peace River office. His primary responsibilities were building inspections, public education advising, fire training of volunteer fire department members and some fire investigations, until a full-time investigator was hired for the Peace River office. In 1982, he was transferred to Edmonton and, along with Ray Ligenza, developed a fire evacuation manual for health care facilities. Once the manual was completed he spent three years on the road training staff in health care facilities from the Edmonton region to the Peace River area.


The government-wide reorganization in 1997 saw Ed and his colleagues moved to the Public Safety Division of Alberta Municipal Affairs. Working out of the FCO, Ed says the six fire safety officers have a wider area to cover. Ed's territory goes from Jasper to Lloydminster, north to Westlock County and south to Leduc County. While many of the municipalities in Ed's jurisdiction are accredited, Ed spends most of his time on the road traveling to the non-accredited municipalities. "Basically, I live on the road," says Ed. "It sure beats sitting in the office."



Ross Bennett

Almost 25 years ago, Ross Bennett began his career with the Alberta government in the Municipal Housing Division of Municipal Affairs in Red Deer. He continued with Housing, which also saw him move from Red Deer to Edmonton for a couple


of years, then to Slave Lake for the Rural Emergency Home Program (REHP), then to Peace River as the regional manager of the REHP. When that program was discontinued, Ross applied for and was the successful candidate as the fire safety officer in Peace River. As Ross sees it, his experience in the housing sector comes in handy in his current position. "Much of my work was teaching, working with families and often handling conflict, all duties that I continue to do as a fire safety officer," he said. Ross also has directly related fire service experience as a volunteer firefighter with the Peace River fire department, something he's been doing for the past 13 years.

When asked about the changing role of the Fire Commissioner's Office and the fact that fire safety officers are also required to wear the new uniforms, Ross says it's a very positive move. "With Pat's vision, the FCO has a new life, direction and mandate. I believe that rural fire departments will especially benefit from the changes," said Ross. "Even the new uniforms are beneficial. They lend some credibility back to us because the uniforms and the car decals visually indicate the organization we're working for, a factor that will also be beneficial when we're dealing with enforcement issues." 

Ernest John Jr. wins first place

Albertan wins national fire poster contest

Ernest John Jr. from Kehewin Cree Nation 123 (near Bonnyville) won first place in a national fire poster contest for his entry in the Grade 7 to 12 category. The contest is held annually in First Nations schools across Canada. For his artistic efforts, Ernest John Jr. won \$500 plus an expense-

paid trip for him and a chaperone to the National All-Native Firefighters' Competition in Garden River, Ontario August 24, 2002. 

L-R: Kehewin Cree Nation Fire Control Officer Gordon Youngchief, contest winner Ernest John Jr. and First Nations Fire Safety Coordinator Leon Smallboy



Innovation brings success in Beaumont

In our continuing profile of successful examples of the Risk Watch Program in Alberta, this issue we focus on Beaumont.

The secret behind Beaumont's successful Risk Watch Program is the enthusiasm of one of its volunteer firefighters. As the fire safety officer for the volunteer Beaumont Fire Department, Ginette Traversy-Ens is determined to get safety messages out to as many people as possible. That desire was the thrust behind the Great Safety Fair, which was held May 4th in Beaumont.

This dynamic lady has been very successful in helping the community become aware of the important safety messages of the Risk Watch Program. Starting with the schools, Traversy-Ens met with the Superintendent of Black Gold Regional School Division and convinced him to include the program in the curriculum. Her goal was to provide one binder per classroom. Through \$8,900 in funding from the Alberta Lottery Foundation, she was able to have the program in place by the end of January 2002.

Traversy-Ens didn't stop there. Her next effort was a community-wide fair, dubbed "The Great Safety Fair." Held in May 2002, the fair attracted more than 500 residents of Beaumont and beyond. She coaxed the schools into participating, and displays from the various classes were included in the fair. "Some classes chose to create

posters with safety messages, while other classes chose to create dioramas or types of safety projects," said Traversy-Ens. "The students were very creative in their displays and their involvement really added to the fair."

The Great Safety Fair also included many exhibitors that covered a diverse range of safety issues. "We had safety displays on just about every topic, from trampolines to suicide prevention to water and bike safety to car seats and smoke alarms. We also had S.T.A.R.S. ambulance on site," added Traversy-Ens.

According to Traversy-Ens, one of the best things about the fair was getting the parents involved too. "The students were really anxious to show off their projects, so that got a lot of parents attending the fair," said Traversy-Ens, who was also instrumental in getting media interested in the Great Safety Fair. "We had Steve Antle from A-Channel out here promoting the fair, and French CBC covered it, as did Radio Canada," she said.

"The only grades that didn't participate in the fair were Grades 7 and 8, said Traversy-Ens, "but that's okay. My next goal is to get the students from Grade 7 and Grade 8 involved as junior firefighters." With plans like this, the Beaumont Fire Department is ensured continued success.


Traversy-Ens has always been interested in working with the fire department, but it wasn't until she moved to Beaumont three years ago that she actually volunteered. "There was an opening in the



L-R: Fire Safety Officer Ginette Traversy-Ens and Beau Meadow School Principal Val McCormick.

department so I grabbed the opportunity," she said. One of her first successes as the fire safety officer was writing an article every week for the local newspaper. "It was a kids' page about safety," said Traversy-Ens. From there, she started doing presentations in the schools. Being bilingual, she was able to provide the presentations in English or French, depending on the request.

The expansion of the Risk Watch Program into schools and into the community actually stemmed from writing the articles, says Traversy-Ens. "I wasn't sure if I was reaching the kids, so I kept trying to think of ways that we could ensure they were getting the message. "Inclusion of the program within the curriculum will be a big help, and through the Great Safety Fair, we were able to reach out further into the community," said Traversy-Ens.

The Beaumont Fire Department is a totally volunteer organization. All 27 members, including the fire chief, receive no payment for responding to calls or taking training courses. "Most of our members are trained in a high level of first aid, including First Responders, Emergency Medical Responders and Emergency Medical Technicians," said Traversy-Ens. "Eighty per cent of our calls are medical, so it's important that we're trained and prepared as first responders." 

Dollars and cents:

\$8,900 from the Alberta Community Lottery Board

\$2,000 from the Beaumont Fire Department Fire Prevention Budget

Priceless the support from volunteers plus involvement and donations from the community



Update on Risk Watch Implementation Network activities

The Fire Commissioner's Office Risk Watch Implementation Network continues to make strides in advancing Risk Watch activities across the province. To get maximum participation from committee members, the May 16, 2002 meeting was held by teleconference. In all, 27 people were able to participate, representing fire departments, regional health authorities, Health Canada, school teachers and a representative each from the Alberta Home Builders' Association and Causin' Fx Productions, a multimedia company.

Activities supporting province-wide implementation of the Risk Watch Program include the following:

- An Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research (ACICR) grant funded project of the Grande Prairie and Area Safe Communities to link Risk Watch to the Health & Life Skills curriculum. The project end date is August/September 2002.
- Funds to link Risk Watch to other programs of study such as Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies were also solicited. The following organizations offered financial support for this project: Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office, Edmonton Emergency Response Department, the Fort McMurray Fire Department, the Rocky View Fire Department, Camrose Fire Department and Strathcona County Emergency Services.
- Risk Watch is being included in the *Guide to Implementation of the Health & Life Skills* curriculum. This guide, approximately 700 pages in length, is in the final draft stage. Two members of

the Risk Watch Implementation Network, Mahendra Wijayasinghe and Tim Vandenbrink, met with Catherine Walker of Alberta Learning. It was decided that information from Risk Watch will be used in three areas of the guide, namely: illustrative examples, student masters and cross-programming connections.

- The Kidsafe connection of the Stollery Children's Centre at the University of Alberta Hospital in Edmonton is preparing a resource manual for nurses who provide community health programs through schools. The manual will point to resources/programs that will help achieve specific outcomes in the Health & Life Skills curriculum of Alberta Learning. Many resources, including Risk Watch, will be

referenced in the manual. For more information about this project, which has an end date of

January 2003, contact Lori Balch at (780) 407-3884.

- Tim Vandenbrink attended a Risk Watch meeting in Minneapolis and brought back information on the application procedure for a Risk Watch championship in Alberta. It is expected that a Champion Risk Watch team will help further promote Risk Watch activities across Alberta.
- Ian Brown of Causin' Fx Productions in Red Deer expressed an interest in enhancing Risk Watch lessons in classrooms using multimedia technology.
- Next steps include drafting the terms of reference of the Risk Watch Implementation Network based on information solicited from members. 🔥

To join the Risk Watch Implementation Network, please contact Mahendra Wijayasinghe at (780) 415-0546, or by e-mail at mahendra.wijayasinghe@gov.ab.ca



fire etc.

The next-generation emergency training centre

As you may have heard, the Alberta Fire Training School introduced a new name and dynamic new visual identity on July 1, 2002, to herald the next phase of its evolution.

“Our vision is that *fire etc.* will become a national centre of excellence in risk management and emergency management services,” says Chief Executive Officer Don Gnatiuk. “To achieve this vision, the organization is evolving into an entrepreneurial, client-centred and strategic service provider.”

Last fall, *fire etc.* presented its plan for expanded facilities and diversified programming to the provincial government. The plan has four broad components:

- a shift to a network management model
- delivery of services on a national scale
- a comprehensive risk management approach to training
- integrated training

In addition to provincial support, the plan calls for partnership initiatives with the corporate and federal government sectors. The national focus and greater involvement of corporate partners will also yield direct benefits for Alberta’s municipal sector, says Gnatiuk.

“Increasing our client base, and the new revenues associated with that, will enable us to offer a broader scope of services to municipal clients, and give us more leverage to offset the costs. Providing affordable training to Alberta municipalities remains our priority.”

As a non-profit company, *fire etc.* will be able to re-invest all profits back into programs and services that will benefit Alberta’s municipalities.

Adoption of a network management model is “cutting edge” in the emergency services community, says Gnatiuk. “Our industry is typically reactive, but *fire etc.* intends to be proactive. Utilizing a network model, we will draw on resources both within and beyond our organization

to provide clients with the best possible service in a timely fashion. A network management model is complex but extremely effective in delivering multiple lines of service at the national level to a variety of clients.”

The risk management approach reflects a growing demand in the public and private sectors for long-term planning to prevent and limit negative impact. “Too often in our industry, time and resources are allocated to short-term solutions,” says Gnatiuk. “In the new model, we will provide solutions over the long term. We will be using our risk management acumen to a much greater extent than before. We are focused on the needs of the client, not on canned solutions to problems, and that is a very new and different approach in our industry.”

Integrated training is also a response to stakeholder needs. In addition to the municipal and industrial fire service, *fire etc.* will place increased emphasis on police, security and medical audiences.

fire etc. at the G-8 Summit

Kananaskis Emergency Services (KES) asked *fire etc.* to help with the G-8 Summit by providing additional professional staff to assist with G-8 incidents from June 23 to 28. A group of 12 students from the Emergency Services



Technology Program, led by Randy Segboer and Jim Smith, were assigned duties with the KES. While the 12 students were at G-8, their fellow students were supporting the group back at *fire etc.* in Vermilion, Alberta.


KES provided the students with phenomenal support and integration and this produced a very cohesive and effective team. Students performed duties typical of someone in full-time service. On any given day the students would train, complete station duties, become familiar with the district, and have the opportunity to do physical training in one of the most secure areas in the world.

In responding to several minor incidents, the students utilized their training and handled the incidents competently and effectively while fulfilling the expectations of both KES and *fire etc.* This event was truly a great experience for staff and students alike.



“Municipalities have been vocal about the need to provide simulated training to all parties involved in disaster and emergency response and management,” says Gnatiuk. “The end benefits of integrated services are cost savings, avoidance of duplication and seamless service to the community.”

“*fire etc.* is the next-generation emergency services training centre,” says Gnatiuk, “and we have a triple bottom line—accountability to society, to fiscal responsibility, and to the environment.”

Along with the new name and look, *fire etc.* has an exciting new web site. Check it out at www.fire-etc.ca. Watch for the new *fire etc.* training calendar in September too. 

For more information contact Don Gnatiuk, Chief Executive Officer, **fire etc.** at (780) 581-2010. Article provided by Cathi Bishop from **fire etc.** (**etc.** stands for emergency training centre).

Conference focused on dealing with disaster

AFCA conference update

The Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) conference in Jasper, Alberta (April 27 - May 1, 2002) was one of the best-attended conferences to date, says current AFCA President Laird Burton. “It was a very timely conference,” noted Burton.

“The focus was on dealing with disaster and disaster preparedness. Our keynote speaker, Donovan Hoggan, who worked at Ground Zero in New York City as part of his position with the Canadian Red Cross, spoke about how to deal with volunteers in a disaster situation.”

According to Tom Makey, new Executive Director of the AFCA (having switched responsibilities with former Executive Director Bill MacKay, who is now taking care of the association's financial responsibilities), there were 259 registered delegates, plus 85 partners. There were also 70 booths at the conference and 116 trade representatives. “All in all, it was a very good conference, with great attendance,” said Makey. “In fact, attendance at the Monday night barbecue reached a high of 444.”

The conference included a number of presentations, ranging from Critical Incident Stress to Media Relations to Disaster Scene Management. Presentations were also made about risk management of an anhydrous ammonia leak and the relationship between the federal and provincial governments in wildland and urban interfaces. A workshop for new fire chiefs was conducted by Fire Commissioner

Pat Graham, former Deputy Fire Commissioner Wayne Girven and Assistant Fire Commissioner Mahendra Wijayasinghe. A binder specifically designed for new fire chiefs, entitled *Establishing and Operating a Fire*

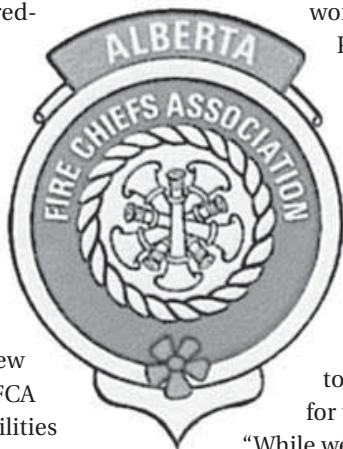
*Department**, was distributed to workshop participants. Brad

Pickering, Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs also spoke about the importance of municipal cooperation. As well, he introduced Denis St. Arnaud as the new Assistant Deputy Minister of the Public Safety Division. “Appointing Denis to this position is terrific news for the fire service,” said Burton.

“While we’re sad to see Dennis Gartner go, it’s very reassuring to have Denis St. Arnaud and his level of experience in this position.”

At the participants’ breakfast hosted by ATCO Electric and ATCO Gas, ATCO Electric presented the AFCA with a cheque for \$40,000. “This cheque represents the remainder of the \$57,000 that electrical industry partners have agreed to provide for the electrical safety program to train emergency workers about the safe handling of electrical hazards at emergency scenes,” said Makey. “We anticipate that the Train the Trainer portion of the program will be in operation by fall 2002.”


Two resolutions were also passed at the conference. One of the resolutions focused on public liability issues and trying to find ways to make it less likely that



Fire Commissioner Pat Graham explaining the duties expected of a new fire chief at the AFCA conference in Jasper

municipalities and fire departments can be sued. The other resolution spoke to the AFCA’s support for the efforts of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts & Counties to replace funding from the Alberta Community Lottery fund.

One of the many conference highlights was the annual tug-of-war competition. With Burton acting as referee, fire chiefs from the north and south were pitted against each other to determine this year’s winner. Once again, the northern Alberta team was named the winner, but only after dragging the team from southern Alberta through the mud.

“Congratulations are extended to the Town of Jasper and the Jasper Park Lodge for holding the conference,” said Burton. “They did a terrific job and handled everything from the opening ceremonies on Sunday, including the full colour guard and piper, to all the various arrangements and events that made the conference a huge success.” 

* If you would like a copy of the **Establishing and Operating a Fire Department** binder, please contact Sarah Barter at the Fire Commissioner’s Office at 427-8392 (one copy per fire department).



Gearing up for Fire Prevention Week 2002


Taking place October 6 - 12, 2002, this year's Fire Prevention Week theme, "Team Up For Fire Safety," focuses on the dedication and tireless effort of firefighters who promote fire safety education to prevent fires. The week-long campaign focuses on three key areas of fire prevention:

- installing/testing smoke alarms
- practising home escape plans
- hunting for home hazards

Through the National Fire Protection Association web site, a wide range of downloadable items, such as classroom

materials and sample media materials, are provided to assist firefighters in promoting fire safety in their communities (see www.firepreventionweek.org).

In conjunction with these materials, the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office is once again developing a campaign kit that will be distributed to all Alberta fire departments. The kits will also be available on the FCO web site (www3.gov.ab.ca/ma/fco) and will be distributed to media. Both radio and television will be utilized to promote Fire Prevention Week in Alberta.

The FCO is also partnering with McDonald's Restaurants to promote its program to support Fire Prevention Week throughout the province. Both English and French versions of the children's activity booklet, geared to Grades 4-6, will be made available to fire departments. 

For more information, contact the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 427-8392.

Expert advice from our two Rays

You were asking...



Ray Cox, Edmonton and Ray Ligenza, Calgary

Q. How much and what kind of artwork materials can be displayed in classrooms and classroom corridors?

A. According to the Alberta Fire Code, there are two approaches a safety codes officer can take when determining how much artwork is permitted on walls and ceilings of classrooms and classroom corridors:

- limiting the quantity of combustible materials, such as student artwork and teaching aids, to not exceed 20 per cent of a wall or ceiling surface.

OR


- accepting quantities greater than 20 per cent if the combustible materials are made or treated with a fire-retardant coating that reduces the flame-spread rating.

There are a number of paper products available that conform to Underwriters' Laboratories of Canada (ULC) standard CAN/ULC-S102-M88, "Standard Method of Tests for Surface Burning Characteristics of Building Materials and Assemblies."

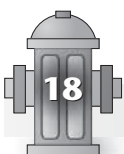
Additionally, other types of combustible materials such as fabrics can be used for display purposes if they are coated with a fire-retardant treatment.

Q. What are the requirements for fire drills in schools?

A. All schools are required to hold total evacuation drills at least three times in each of the fall and spring school terms. For each drill that is held, the owner must prepare records of the drills that describe:

- the date of the drill
- the evacuation time
- comments and recommendations 

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Digest

Leduc deputy fire chief appointed

Fire Chief Rick Sereda of the City of Leduc Fire Services announced that Deputy Chief Gerry Kelly commenced his duties as the second deputy chief for the City of Leduc on May 13, 2002. Deputy Chief Kelly has been a volunteer member of the City of Leduc fire services for the past 14 years and brings many years of experience from the City of Edmonton Emergency Response Department as a full-time Emergency Medical Technician.

Hinton getting new emergency services building

The Town of Hinton has taken the first step towards building a new emergency services building at its Government Centre site. A joint venture by the town of Hinton and Hinton EMS, a private company that provides ambulance service for the town and county, the new building will see the fire department moved from its current proximity to heavy industry to a more central location that is adjacent to the ambulance service.

Warburg fire hall expanded

Warburg's volunteer firefighters now have an expanded facility thanks to the recent addition to the local fire hall. The new facility, which celebrated a grand opening on April 20, 2002, includes an increased area to house fire trucks as well as ample training space and a fitness room upstairs. The cost of the addition was shared between Leduc County and the Village of Warburg.

New Videos

Although it boasts a minimalist title, the 17-minute video **BURNS** is an excellent and comprehensive video on burns. Topics covered include:

- *Structure of the skin and its functions*
- *Causes of burn injuries—flames, hot liquids, chemicals, electricity, radiation, friction, molten metal, lightning, etc.*
- *Types of burn injuries—1st degree (superficial), 2nd degree (partial) and 3rd degree (full thickness) burns and a vivid description of these burns along with graphic footage of actual burn victims*
- *Effects of burns such as infection, shock and breathing difficulties*
- *First aid for burns and what NOT to do*
- *Principles of burn first aid*
- *When to seek medical attention*

To order this or other fire protection videos, please contact the audio-visual section of the Alberta Human Resources and Employment Library at (780) 415-0576.

Embracing technology in Olds

Thanks to the efforts of three students from Olds College, the Olds Fire Department is able to use technology to efficiently reach fire locations. The program, called Map Info, was developed by the students for the fire department. By entering the legal land description into the computer, the program tells fire crews where the land is located and how to get there. According to Olds fire chief Jack MacIntosh, "this new program will really shorten our rescue times."

Calls that come into the fire department go through a dispatch service called Access Dial, which now has the capability to work with Map Info to send information to a printer within the fire detachment. The printer then prints out the legal description of where the emergency is taking place and it also maps out the quickest route for the fire crew.

New management at Municipal Affairs...



Brad Pickering



Denis St. Arnaud

Brad Pickering replaced C.D. (Doug) Radke as Deputy Minister of Alberta Municipal Affairs following Radke's retirement this summer. As well, Denis St. Arnaud has moved into the position of Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Safety Division, replacing Dennis Gartner, who moved to Alberta Finance.

Alberta fire chief acknowledged for exemplary service

Hinton fire chief Ken Brands was recognized for his dedication to the fire service in Alberta and beyond. At a ceremony held March 25, 2002 in Edmonton, Brands was presented with a medal for exemplary service from Alberta's Lieutenant Governor Lois Hole.

Brand's 27 years in the fire service included starting out as a volunteer firefighter in Fort McMurray. He then moved into a full-time firefighter position in 1980 in Fort McMurray, where he not only took as many training courses as possible but also worked through the ranks. He left Fort McMurray in 1988 to become Hinton's deputy fire chief. In addition to continuing his learning curve, he also shares his knowledge with others. He provides in-house training for the Hinton Fire Department and also provides training for other organizations. One of his most unique experiences, though, is his involvement with the municipality of Chegutu, Zimbabwe. He has gone overseas six times to teach them about fire safety and is determined to help the Africans become self-sufficient in fire training. He has even created a three-phase plan to assist them in this endeavour. Phase I was to build a national fire training centre, which has been achieved; phase II was putting together a national training standard; and phase III is building a promotion system to fit into that.

Crossfield firefighter honoured

Brian Baker, a 38-year-old Crossfield volunteer firefighter, will receive a bravery medal from Governor General Adrienne Clarkson later this year. He is being honoured for saving Michele Baragar, 25 at the time, by pushing her away from an oncoming car and absorbing the vehicle's impact himself.

Baker was responding to several minor accidents during a blinding snowstorm November 4, 2000, when he came upon a fender-bender on Highway 2. While escorting Baragar across the highway, he noticed a vehicle bearing down on them in low visibility. He pushed Baragar to safety in the ditch before the vehicle struck him head-on, breaking both his legs, dislocating his shoulder and cracking his skull. "I did cartwheels 100 feet down the road," said Baker, who needed 58 stitches, spent 49 days in hospital and has had nine surgeries following the accident. Baragar suffered a concussion and cuts and bruises to her face and legs. Baker credits his helmet with saving his life. Besides the bravery medal, Baker has also received awards from St. John Ambulance and the Royal Canadian Humane Association for his heroism.

Smoky River establishes director of protective services

The Smoky River region has appointed Ian Fox as its first director of protective services. As the former fire chief of Cremona, Alberta, Fox's responsibilities in this new position include regional fire chief, director of disaster services and safety codes officer. He conducts fire inspections of commercial, industrial, institutional and residential buildings as well as managing the overall municipal emergency preparedness programs.



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

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

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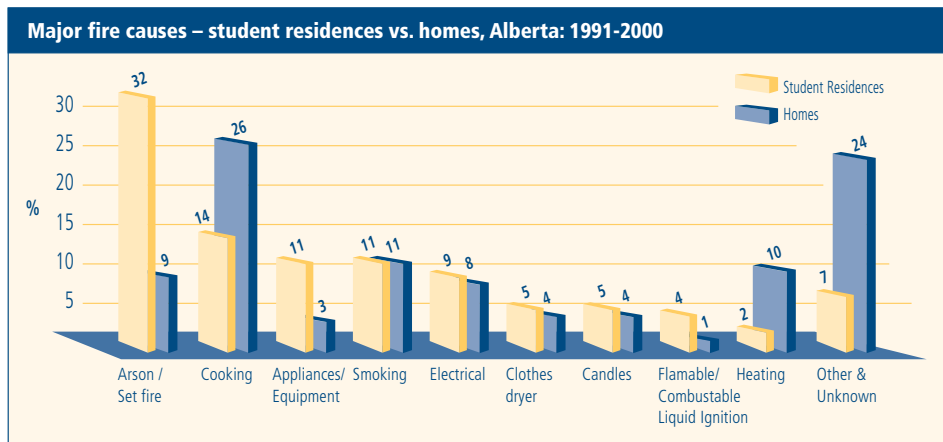
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Fires in student residences

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- Many apartment complexes and college dormitories have banned halogen torchiere lamps because of high-energy consumption and fire potential. Colleges and universities are very concerned about halogen lamps in student dormitories.
- Vandalism of fire safety systems and pranks involving the setting of fires simply cannot be tolerated by academic institutions. Students need to be made to understand the dangers from fire, and the institutional and legal penalties they may face for their actions.
- Student orientation programs should spell out strict disciplinary measures to be taken when infractions of safety procedures occur.
- Improper use of 911 notification systems delays emergency response.
- In the case of dormitories and campus buildings that have frequent false alarms, the alarms may be ignored altogether.
- Building evacuations are delayed due to lack of preparation and pre-planning.
- Vandalized and improperly maintained smoke alarms and fire alarm systems inhibit early detection of fires.
- A link between alcohol consumption and fires has received much attention. It has been suggested that steps to reduce alcohol consumption may reduce fire losses on and off campus.
- In the wake of a number of fatal fires in student residences in the U.S., members of the fire service and various legislative bodies have worked on getting campus housing retrofitted with sprinkler systems.
- Fire exits and the local alarm systems in residences need to be inspected and/or tested regularly during the academic year, especially to check vandalism.
- It is important that students develop a well thought out plan of action for responding to a fire and its aftermath. After the event, actions involve communicating with the students and parents, providing alternate housing, arranging to replace lost textbooks and other supplies, and other logistical concerns. This will enable students to continue with minimum disruption, and also protect the image and visibility of the institution.
- Fire safety messages need to be conveyed to the target audiences through as many vehicles as possible, including campus radio and TV stations, newspapers, brochures and the Internet. 🔥

For more information

A brochure *Get Out and Stay Alive*, developed by the US Fire Administration can be downloaded from www.usfa.fema.gov/about/press/99-184.htm Copies are also available from the Fire Commissioner's Office. The brochure provides prevention and safety tips to students living in student residences.