

Annual SAR Conference Held

The annual Search and Rescue Conference was held in Whitehorse on February 19, 2000. Representatives from four Yukon SAR Societies were present, joined by staff from Emergency Measures, the RCMP, Department of Justice and the Rescue Coordination Centre in Victoria.

A full agenda consumed most of the day, and lively discussion occurred on a number of topics including the role of the Search and Rescue Advisory Committee, the potential of a Yukon-wide SAR Society, and the application process for new SAR volunteers, including the need for RCMP Criminal Records Checks. Major Colin Goodman from the Rescue Coordination Centre provided an excellent overview of their mandate as it relates to Ground SAR, and encouraged those interested in training for aerial spotter training to approach local members of the Civilian Air Search and Rescue Association (CASARA) for consideration. Maj. Goodman also encouraged the promotion of volunteers for SAR as they are important assets. He suggested that difficulties experienced here in the Yukon are not unique, as many other jurisdictions are faced with the same challenges.

Some of the highlights from the conference include:

- The RCMP has confirmed that fees normally charged for conducting Criminal Records Checks would be waived for new SAR volunteers, unless fingerprints need to be sent to Ottawa for verification.
- The volunteer component of the SAR Advisory Committee will define its role with volunteers, and consider other options for representation on a

territory wide basis.

- An Administrative Review of the SAR program is currently being conducted, and will take a critical look at legislative mandates, and roles and responsibilities of government agencies for provision of SAR. Various operational issues may be indicated for follow-up at a future time. Capital funding for SAR equipment is being reduced



- next year, so other sources of funding need to be explored to support new equipment purchases.
- The SAR Dog Program in the Yukon is maturing, and roles and responsibilities still need to be defined. In the interim some equipment will be purchased for teams with validated dog/handlers.
- Wayne Merry is developing field training modules for use this year.

It is hoped that next years' conference will bring with it a heightened level of interest from more teams around the Yukon. A change in the date to avoid the running of the Yukon Quest, and Rendezvous was suggested and should help un-clutter schedules.



We certainly don't need to report on the meteorite that lit up the skies around numerous Yukon communities on January 18, 2000, or do we? The public's interest and need for information was exceptional, and required some scrambling to gather factual information to share.

Various RCMP Detachments, media outlets and Emergency Measures were inundated with phone calls shortly after the then unknown object rocketed over Whitehorse and Carcross, where it came to an abrupt stop. As with many potential emergencies or disasters, this event came completely unannounced.

It quickly became obvious that coordination of agencies would be necessary to assess any potential risk to residents, assist the scientific community in research, and assist the media with collecting information. The Emergency Measures Branch assumed this role as defined in the "An Abridged Guide to Initial Emergency Response Roles" booklet.

This document identifies the "Lead Agency" and "Support Agencies" for each potential emergency or disaster likely in the Yukon. Under the "Space Object Re-Entry" category, Emergency Preparedness Canada is listed as the Lead Agency, with EMO providing a support function. Emergency Preparedness Canada provided liaison with other federal government departments, while EMO staff coordinated local activities with Natural Resources Canada, RCMP, Yukon Search and Rescue Volunteers and the media.

There was initial concern that radioactivity or excessively hot material might be present, and that if found, could injure a person. This was quickly dispelled by scientists, which provided a new science lesson. In fact, debris from meteorites is not radioactive or hot. The opposite is true. A meteorite, which had been floating around in space for millions of years is extremely cold.

As it enters the atmosphere, only the surface begins to heat up as friction is generated while passing through the air. Eventually, the tremendous difference between the core temperature and the surface causes the meteorite to



Great Balls of Fire !

detonate or explode, usually above the surface. Any debris hitting the ground remains cold, and non-radioactive.

Public reports of the large fireball "breaking-up", and scientific data indicated that there was a chance some physical evidence of the meteorite might be found. In order to further foster the partnerships between agencies, EMO continued to participate by coordinating a "hasty search" in the area most likely to retain evidence if it existed.

Members from the Whitehorse District Search and Rescue Society, and the Carcross Search and Rescue Team were tasked to provide some limited ground searches, and expert aerial reconnaissance planning. Reports of sightings, US Military Satellite information, and seismic data were analyzed to provide the most likely "Point Last Seen".

From all accounts, the meteorite's trajectory as it entered the earth's atmosphere was approximately north by northwest to south by southeast. The main part of the meteorite is believed to have detonated approximately 25 kilometers above the surface of the earth almost, directly above Caribou Mountain near Carcross.

Eyewitness accounts suggest the meteorite fractured severely at this point, and large pieces were seen flying in different directions. From this information, a search planning exercise took place, and maps were drawn to support an overflight of the area to look for obvious signs of the debris.

The frozen surfaces of lakes were identified as being the

cont... page 3

Emergency Preparedness Week

May 1-7

"Together We Prepare"

From floods and ice storms to power failures and chemical spills, a number of emergency situations in Canada over the past decade have taught us one thing - the importance of being prepared.

Emergency Preparedness Week, from May 1-7, offers those groups involved in emergency planning and disaster relief to promote the importance of being prepared to the public. This year's theme "Together We Prepare" emphasizes the roles families, communities and the country can play to ready ourselves for

Everyone has a role to play.

emergency situations.

The Family:


Preparedness must start at home. This is crucial to reducing the potential impacts of an emergency situation. By increasing the ability of everyone to meet their basic needs, the burden on a community's resources during an emergency situation is reduced. Preparing a basic emergency survival kit and knowing how and where to get emergency information are steps in the right direction.

The Community:

Preparedness is also a responsibility communities take seriously. It starts with community groups being involved in establishing and testing an emergency plan - territorial and municipal

authorities, first responders, emergency health services, social services, local industry, utilities, media, volunteer organizations and the public. Working together before an event will develop better response during emergencies.

The Country:

In Canada, many organizations work together to provide a national support structure, which can assist a community in any emergency extending beyond its resource capabilities. From provincial/territorial and federal resources to those of non-governmental organizations and private industry, a multitude of expertise and resources are available to support local and community efforts and encourage best practices. Preventing and reducing the risk associated with recurring or high-risk events is always possible  through dialogue and co-operation.

"Great Balls of Fire!" continued

most likely areas for debris location. Because of the growing interest, and the fact that new snow would fall, it was decided to search the area by aircraft. The RCMP contributed the use of their Twin Otter, and on January 22, 2000 the pilot, three observers and two members of the media were on their way to see what could be found.

During the flight members of the Carcross SAR team were scanning the area by snow machine as part of a "training exercise". Searching the lake surfaces is also important because when spring arrives, any evidence that may be there will sink to the bottom. Debris on land will always be available for finding.

Plan to be involved with Emergency Preparedness Week May 1 to 7

Around the same time people were looking on the ground, NASA had dispatched a civilian version of the US Military's U2 "spy plane" to collect dust samples from the upper atmosphere, and take pictures of the ground where an impact might have occurred. At the time of writing, the dust samples that were collected had not been fully analyzed.

Two pieces of the meteorite have been found and are currently undergoing analysis at NASA. Undoubtedly this summer, the hills will be alive with the sound of prospectors.

HYPOTHERMIA IN THE MIDDLE OF SUMMER?

By Cathy Humphrey

Mother Nature, for all of her beauty, can turn on unsuspecting hikers and skiers with lightning speed. Even a small taste of her power can leave us in awe, and in danger of suffering the ill effects of exposure. Planning, proper attire and a little common sense are the best defense.

Avoiding hypothermia, as everyone knows, is critical while taking part in winter activities. But winter is not the only time that outdoor activities leave us vulnerable to the elements. It is equally important in the fall and spring to protect yourself from losing too much body heat. In fact, hypothermia is more likely to occur when the outside temperature is between 0°C and 10°C. In colder temperatures, it seems, people tend to dress more appropriately when they first set out.

With record snowfalls in parts of western Canada last winter and a less than spectacular summer, many hikers found that even in July it was necessary to don a full layer of fleece and a windbreaker to keep warm during a lunch stop. While it may be warm and sunny in the valley, the same is not always true at higher elevations. It is common for the temperature at the top to be a few degrees colder than in the valley.

Because of this, it is important to protect yourself from hypothermia all year round.

Your normal body temperature is approximately 37°C. Hypothermia begins when your core body temperature drops below 35°C. To protect your vital organs, your body will restrict the blood flow to your extremities, sacrificing them if necessary. It is, therefore, imperative

that you be well prepared for any trip into the outdoors.

The following 6 steps can help protect you from this life-threatening, yet easily avoidable condition.

Early Warning Signs:

- shivering
- hunching of shoulders
- decrease in manual dexterity
- numbness of skin
- fatigue

1. Wear multiple layers of clothing. Layering is by far the most flexible way to control your body temperature. You can add or remove layers as necessary to increase or lower your body temperature.

2. Because cotton stays wet when dampened with perspiration or precipitation, it should be avoided. Numerous synthetic materials are available that are quite affordable and dry more quickly, reducing the amount of heat lost through evaporation.

3. Always bring a rain jacket. Allowing your clothes to get wet will only hasten the onset of hypothermia. Put your jacket on BEFORE you get wet. It will do you little good to put it on when you're already soaked to the skin.

4. As much as 50 per cent of your body heat can be lost through your head. Always keep a warm hat or head band in your backpack.

5. Take the time to learn the symptoms and treatment for hypothermia. Symptoms can appear with the lowering of your body's core temperature by as little as 2°C. You should never ignore the symptoms, and must take immediate action to prevent further heat loss.

6. Before you set out, get weather and trail reports. Spring rains and winter runoff can often wash out sections of trail, forcing you to turn back or take an alternate, and possibly longer, route.

The Yukon has an abundance of outdoor activities for people of every level of experience and fitness, and the rewards are certainly worth the effort. With a little planning and common sense, you can enjoy what the area has to offer without putting yourself in danger.



Keeping up with Mother Nature

We have all seen the pictures, and many of us have participated as part of disaster response teams. Severe weather events and other natural disasters appear to be on the rise - more obvious though are the rise in financial losses that can be attributed to these events.



1972 Flood - Ross River

The cost of weather-related disasters in Canada -- ice storms, windstorms, floods and droughts -- have skyrocketed during the past 15 years, rising 20 to 30 times over, says a report prepared for Emergency Preparedness Canada (EPC) on Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness in a Changing Climate.

Insured losses peaked in 1998 at \$1.45 billion, largely due to the ice storm that devastated parts of Ontario and Quebec in January, 1998. In 1984, Canada's insurance industry paid out only \$39 million in claims as a result of weather-related disasters. These totals do not include residential losses, which are not insurable against floods.

"The much more-rapidly increasing rate of loss from climatically related disasters such as floods, storms and droughts may indeed suggest that these latter hazards may be increasing in frequency and severity," says the study, entitled Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness in a Changing Climate.

The report suggests man-made climate change may be the reason behind the more frequent and costly storm episodes. An increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases - primarily carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide produced largely through the burning of coal, oil and gasoline - has contributed to an increase in global temperatures.

The report indicates that Canada has seen its average

temperature rise 1° C since 1895. There has also been a discernible increase in the frequency of winter storms throughout the 20th century.

It is believed that additional warming will change the distribution of heat and thus the flow of energy through the climate system, the report states. This will in turn alter the circulation patterns of the atmosphere and oceans, and modify the hydrological cycle, through which water is circulated between the Earth's surface and atmosphere.

As a result, the report concludes that the position of many of the world's major storm tracks could shift significantly.

So how will this affect Canada?

The EPC report, which calls on Ottawa to spend money now to mitigate future storm-related damages, notes that climate models predict Canada will experience shorter, warmer winters marked by more intense storms that are likely to produce more flooding.

The report also predicts extremes of the hydrological cycle, floods and droughts, will become more frequent with heavy storms increasing in frequency by more than 50 per cent. It means what are now 100-year floods, such as the Manitoba's Red River flood of 1997, could become 50-year occurrences.



EMO Office Completing Renovations

After months of planning and weeks of disruption, the Emergency Measures Branch office is nearing the completion of renovations. The entire floor plan has been changed to accommodate staff changes and dedicate space for a more effective training room and emergency operations centre. The entire building has been re-cabled for data, audio and video capability, and the administrative offices have been moved away from the training room.



Staff are looking forward to working together in the same building, and expect to provide a more efficient facility for the many users. During renovations, staff continued to work in the building and were able to maintain services, and allow for training courses and meetings in the classroom. Unpacking boxes and arranging furniture will take some time, but you are all welcome to drop by and have a look around.



Putting the Bug to Bed

A considerable amount of time and energy was spent preparing for anticipated problems associated with the roll-over into 2000. More than a year of risk assessments, analysis and planning went into ensuring the Yukon was as prepared

as possible for any related events. With all the planning now behind us, and the Year 2000 well underway, we can take the information we have collected and move forward in Emergency Planning.

Businesses, governments and, most importantly, individuals used the Y2K Bug as incentive to make sure their "house was in order". Potential problems were analyzed, contingency plans were developed, and resources were acquired to minimize any risk to public safety, critical utilities, and property. Although there were no significant problems associated with the arrival of the New Year, the work done to prepare was certainly not wasted. A significant awareness of potential problems was generated, and many people are now aware of the importance of planning.

During the roll-over period, the Joint Emergency Operations Coordination Centre was staffed by Emergency Measures personnel, Department of National Defense, and the RCMP. A reporting system was in place with all communities in the Yukon, and back up communications systems were available if needed. Fortunately the new year arrived without consequence,

and although staff were not able to spend time with family and friends, they were grateful that emergency services were not required.

Most people are undoubtedly sick of the term "Y2K Bug". It is now safe to say that the bug can finally be put to bed, however, can we let our guard down? No. All of us have to make sure we are still prepared for what lies around the corner. If the Y2K Bug had bitten us, it would have only initiated problems that would be very similar to those that could result from any other type of emergency. Earthquakes, floods, fires and severe cold, are all similar to the bug in that they would affect our lives by forcing evacuations, interrupting power, communications, water and sewer. These are things every individual should be prepared for.

We should all be thankful the bug is dead, but it is important to remember the legacy it has left behind.



Yukon Fire Awareness Brochure:

A new wildfire awareness brochure produced by Indian and Northern Affairs, Fire Management is due for release this spring. "So what?" you might say - another government pamphlet.

This publication is a four page full colour brochure that is designed to create a hard hitting fire prevention message for people that live in the wildland-urban interface. The front page of a woman and child fleeing

a fire's flames will hopefully grab the reader's attention to open up to read it. It uses the new FireSmart manual as its reference source.

Included in the brochure are: a quick homeowner checklist to rate the home for wildfire hazard, and tips on how to make your home and community more FireSmart.

The brochure will be distributed to all Yukon community residents and



rural subdivision Whitehorse residents through a targeted mail-drop. We are also hoping to use it as a starting point for a door-to-door campaign in conjunction with the local fire departments.

For more information please contact:
Dave Milne, Fire Prevention Coordinator 667-3342.



SARSCENE '99

by Rick Harder

SARSCENE '99 in St. Johns, Newfoundland, was a resounding success. The national Search and Rescue Secretariat (NSS) had predicted a turn out of from 400 to 450 people. There were close to 900 registered by the time the dust settled around the registration tables.

SARVAC (Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada) held two days of meeting prior to SARSCENE activities. As the Yukon Director to SARVAC, I was in attendance to represent our view on the committee. One of the highlights of our agenda was a meeting with the Director General of the NSS, Mr. Bill Slaughter. This was the first time that such a meeting had occurred since the inception of the committee. Mr. Slaughter was presented with SARVAC's view on the requirement for Ground SAR to provide 25% of the cost of funding when applying under the New Initiatives Funding (NIF) program. We see this as an unfair burden to GSAR, and this point was made very clear to the Director General. Mr. Slaughter assured us that during the coming fiscal year, there will be a review of this policy and he expects the 25% requirement to be dropped. This is good news and will provide a more level field in view of the fact that the Coast Guard and Air Search and Rescue are not required to contribute the 25%.

SARVAC was started under NIF sponsorship, and has come to the end of that funding. The subcommittee on funding is scrambling to find new funding sources so that we can continue to do the work that we have started.

Situation Report

April 10, 2000 - At 03:15 hours a snowmobiler was reported missing in the Mt. Sima area. Two snow machines became stuck in the snow and when walking out for help, the individuals became separated. One person made it to the highway where he reported his partner missing to the RCMP. Whitehorse District SAR, EMO and the RCMP conducted a ground and air search using snow machines, dogs and helicopter. The moderately hypothermic victim was found at 07:00 and transported to hospital. ❀

The remainder of the week was made up of one day of SAR games held on the Wednesday and three days of conference. There were a good variety of workshops to attend. All of the workshops that I was able to attend were very well facilitated and informative.

One of the most valuable parts of the conference for me was the opportunity to network with people from all over this vast nation who are involved in Search and Rescue. I came away with a new understanding of how large a group of peers that we have, and how many of the problems that we grapple with have already been faced by others.

The other jurisdictions with the exception of Yukon, NWT and Nunavut have provincial associations for GSAR that represent the jurisdiction and are responsible for the delivery of training. This gives the individual GSAR societies an organization that only has the SAR function as a mandate and results in a friendlier approach to the day to day routine.

SARSCENE 2000 will be held in Laval, Quebec and is expected to be just as spectacular as SARSCENE '99. ❀

Coming Events

2000

EMO

- May Basic Emergency Plans and Operations (Dawson City)
- June TBA Transportation of Dangerous Goods-First Responder Awareness
- Aug 28- Sept 1 Emergency Operations Centre Management

2000

SAR

- Apr 22-23 Team Leader (Watson Lake)
- May 12-14 SAR Training Weekend (Whitehorse)
- May 20-21 Rope Safety and Evacuation (Whitehorse)
- May 27-28 Tracker 1 (Whitehorse)

For information on these courses and other training being offered, please contact EMO at 667-5220 or 1-800-661-0408, local 5220. ❀

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