

EMO is Important to the New Minister, Pam Buckway

Only a week into her new role as Minister of Community and Transportation Services, the Honorable Pamela J. Buckway attended the Yukon Disaster Committee Annual Meeting on May 16 (see accompanying article on page 2).

In her first opportunity to speak with YDC, Ms. Buckway told delegates it was a priority of the Yukon Government and a personal priority of hers to ensure that Yukoners are prepared for and able to respond to emergencies. To do this, she emphasized a need for cooperation between all Yukoners and all levels of government.

"As I look around the room," she said to those in attendance, "I can see that this spirit of cooperation is alive and well in the Yukon."

Ms. Buckway said she supports the efforts of EMO in providing diverse learning opportunities to cover all aspects of planning for the individual, community, territory and as a nation."

"If we don't practice, we won't be nearly as effective when an emergency occurs. We can't react quickly if we haven't put in the hours building our skills," she said.

In particular, the Minister noted several strategies for preparedness, which have been put in place. Specific mention was made to the recent acquisition of a mobile emergency hospital (see page 4 for information on "*Emergency Hospital Arrives*"), assistance from the Fire Smart Program for communities to reduce the risk of fire around their homes and community emergency plans.



Ms. Buckway offered her appreciation to the Emergency Measures Branch for "contributing to the high level of emergency preparedness the Yukon enjoys."

"Let's not forget we can always do better", she added, while at the same time offering to participate in our efforts to do just that - better planning.



Yukon Disaster Committee AGM

The Yukon Disaster Committee is structured to represent all organizations involved in emergency planning including those with mandates to respond to emergencies. Broad representation is provided across the over one hundred Committee members.

The Committee provides a territorial focus for activities of the Emergency Measures Organization, and allows

for the sharing of emergency preparedness information to the benefit of all Yukoners.

On May 17, 2000 the annual general meeting of the Yukon Disaster Committee was held in Whitehorse and attended by forty-five delegates. Minutes of the meeting will be forwarded to all members of the committee, however, the following is a short summary of the event:

Reports on EMO Activities:

1. Merger of Emergency Measures and Communications Branches (more information in Winter 1999 Quarterly Memo)
2. EMO office and Joint Emergency Operations Co-ordination Centre Renovations (more information in Spring 2000 Quarterly Memo)
3. Disaster Assistance Guidelines

Reports on last year's main EMO operations:

1. Y2K Operations Briefing (more information in Winter 1999 Quarterly Memo)
2. Burwash Fire Operations Briefing (more information in Fall 1999 Quarterly Memo)
3. Meteorite Operations Briefing (more information in Spring 2000 Quarterly Memo)

Topics raised for discussion, included:

- The need for Mutual Aid Agreements between communities
- Clarification of the Department of Education responsibilities for student welfare during anticipated or ongoing emergency situations.
- Yukon-wide "911" service issues.
- The need for updated community emergency plans.
- The need for greater First Nation involvement in emergency planning and training.
- Continued support for the Fire Smart Program, a partnership between DIAND, YTG and communities.
- An awareness of the potential effects of climate change on the Yukon.



With less than half of the committee's membership benefiting from the discussion of this year's meeting, perhaps it is time to think of new approaches for conducting next year's event. If you have ideas for attracting more of our members to future meetings, please contact Kevin Wallinger, Planning and Training Coordinator, Emergency Measures Branch.



Yukon Territory better prepared thanks to funding made available through Joint Emergency Preparedness Program

WHITEHORSE, May 16/2000

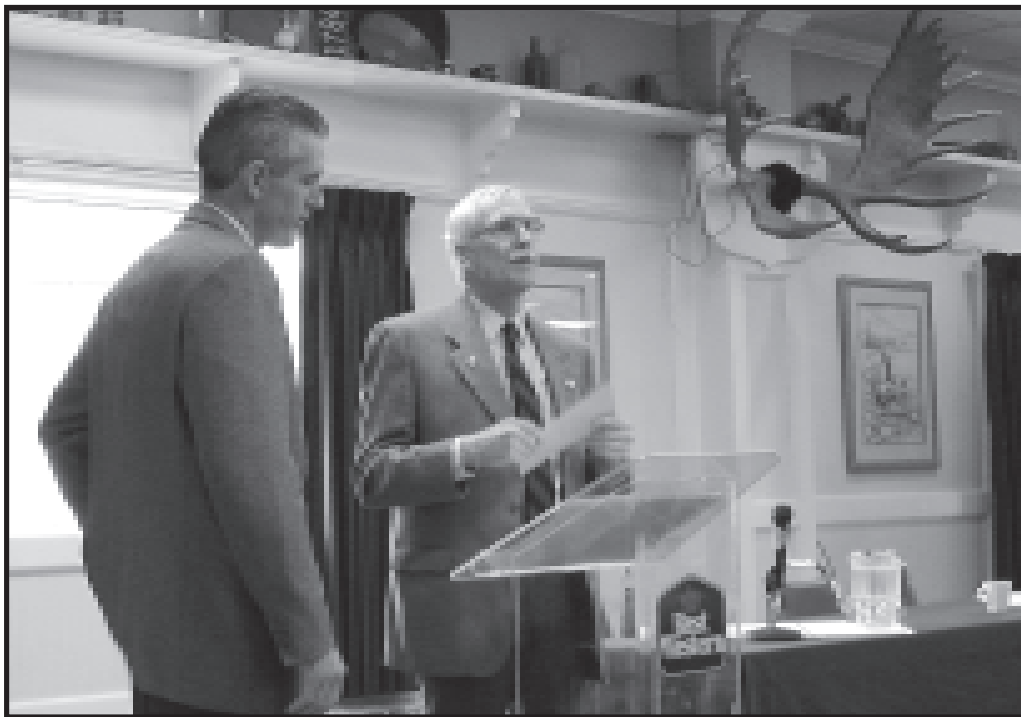
The Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew announced today, on behalf of the Hon. Art Eggleton, Minister of National Defense and Minister Responsible for Emergency Preparedness, the delivery of the Government of Canada's contributions towards two Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) projects. The cheque delivery coincided with the annual Yukon Disaster Committee meeting.

The JEPP funding delivered today involved a Government of Canada contribution of \$ 90,995, which supplemented \$ 148,465 in Yukon Government funding, for ongoing EMO operations: and a \$ 4,635 Government of Canada contribution, matching the Yukon funding, of a disaster exercise held in the City of Whitehorse. These projects were proposed and completed as part of the total JEPP funding of \$ 406,666 that was announced

during fiscal 1999/2000 by the federal and territorial governments.

This JEPP funding supports the Yukon Territory's ongoing investment into our emergency measures organization and Yukon's community emergency preparedness programs," said Minister Pam Buckway, Yukon's Minister of Community and Transportation Services and Minister Responsible for Yukon's Emergency Measures Organization. The Joint Emergency

Preparedness Program is a good example of how federal, territorial and local emergency planners can



"Cheque presented to Eric Magnuson, Director, Emergency Measures Branch by Bill McMillan, Assistant Regional Director, BC/YT Region, Emergency Preparedness Canada."

This contribution is a tangible demonstration of the Government of Canada's commitment to work in co-operation with provincial and territorial governments in order to strengthen emergency planning, preparedness and response," said Minister Blondin-Andrew. By working together, we can help to ensure a safer and more secure quality of life for Yukon residents by reducing the impacts of emergencies and disasters."

JEPP enables the federal government to contribute to, or to undertake jointly with the provinces and territories, projects that help to ensure a reasonably uniform level of emergency preparedness and response across the country.

work together to reduce the risks inherent to the Yukon's unique climate and geography. "

The Joint Emergency Preparedness Program payment announced today was provided for in last year's federal budget and is therefore built into the existing fiscal framework. It is an example of how the Government of Canada is setting priorities in its spending so that it can better serve Canadians by making efficient use of their tax dollars.

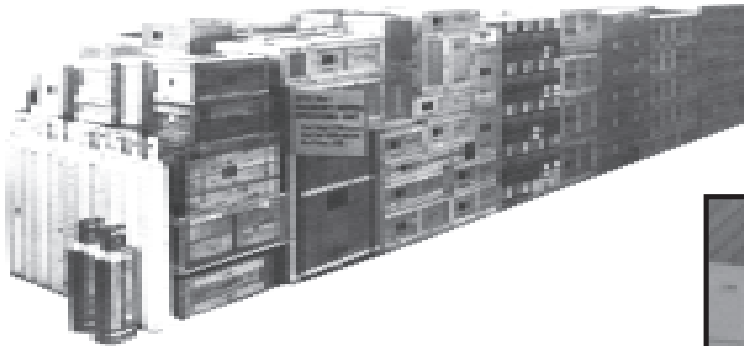
The Joint Emergency Preparedness Program is administered by Emergency Preparedness Canada.



Emergency Hospital Arrives

The Yukon has recently taken delivery of an emergency hospital that can travel wherever a tractor-trailer or large aircraft can go. Inside the 500 wooden crates that house

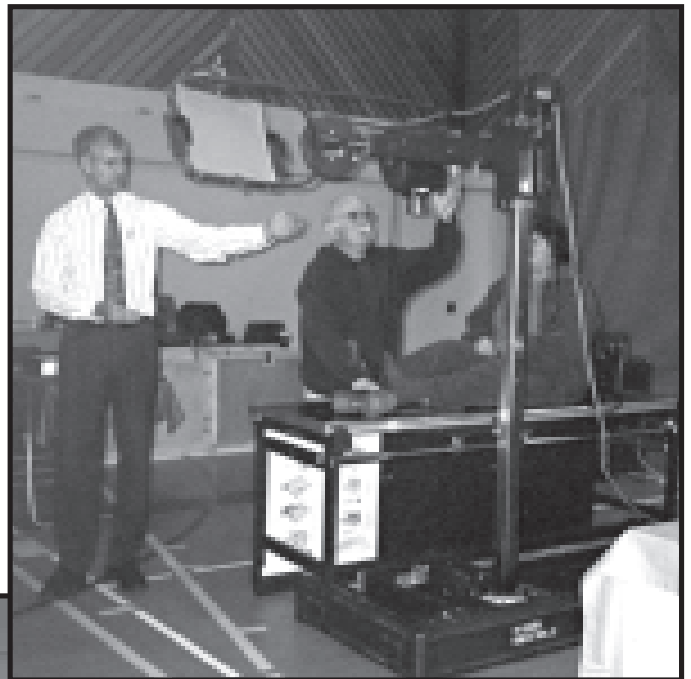
supplement the existing formal health care system in the event of a disaster. The most likely use for the equipment would be for evacuees from a community threatened by forest fires or floods. Less likely, but still a threat is the possibility of a major aircraft crash that overwhelms the present system. There is also the growing possibility of flu pandemic similar to one in 1918, when millions of people got ill and could not be adequately cared



Packaged Emergency Hospital: Measures 40 feet long by 12 feet wide by 7 feet high.

the mobile hospital is equipment for 60 acute care beds, another 140 beds for evacuees, an x-ray department, pharmacy central stores, laboratory and an operating room.

Setting up the emergency hospital in a large building, such as a school or community hall, takes only a few hours with the help of individuals who have been trained to supervise the procedure.



These units were used extensively during the ice storm in Quebec in 1998 where the beds, linens and electrical generators were invaluable in responding to this disaster. The Yukon will use the emergency hospital to

for.

The legacy of the Arctic Winter Games has also helped in emergency preparedness for the Yukon. Along with the 200 bed mobile hospital, an additional, 200 bunk beds (400 mattresses) are stored in Whitehorse to provide assistance during times of need. These beds were used at the Pan Am Games in Winnipeg before coming to Whitehorse.

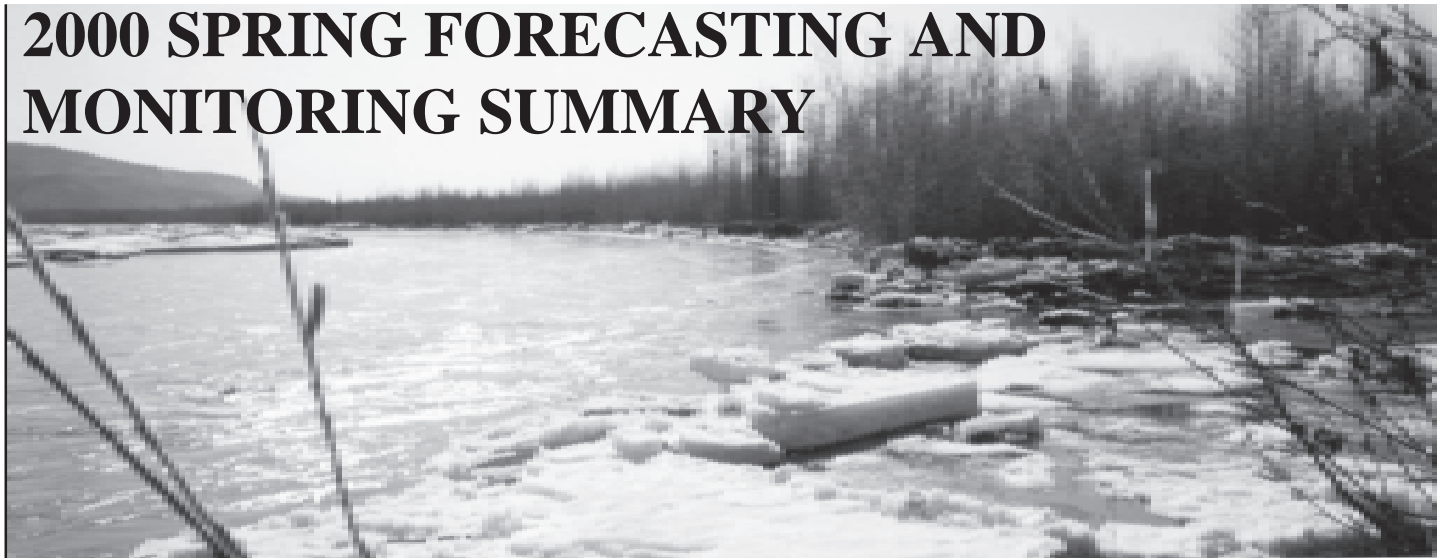
Owned by the federal government, the mobile emergency hospital is under the care of Peter Snell, manager of the Yukon's emergency health services. It is currently stored in a metal hanger at the Whitehorse Airport.

It is hoped we will never have to unpack the crates to access the equipment, but it is there should we need it.



DIAND WATER RESOURCES

2000 SPRING FORECASTING AND MONITORING SUMMARY



Break-up at Dawson was near normal in terms of timing, but this was followed by a prolonged cooling trend, which generally delayed break-up at Old Crow by one week and the spring freshet by 2 weeks. Water levels are now rising but the annual peak flow on many Yukon streams has not yet occurred. The Water Resources Division of DIAND, produced forecasts for, and monitored water levels at Dawson and Old Crow, and are currently doing so for Ross River, Mayo and Upper Liard. Break-up at Dawson produced sub-critical water levels, while conditions at Old Crow, though not critical, produced a few tense hours due to an ice jam through the community, which caused water levels to rise quickly.

Dawson

The official break-up occurred at 16:35 on May 5, a few days in advance of the May 9 mean date. Normally break-up at Dawson is initially a local event triggered by Klondike River inflows. This year the entire reach between the White and Chandindu Rivers (approximately 155 km) moved simultaneously producing a 90 km long ice run and jam which was grounded on solid ice near the international border upstream of Eagle. Water levels at Dawson quickly rose 1.9 m in response to break-up, to a stage of 3.6 m which was sustained for approximately 20 hours until the ice moved through town, after which it fell to its pre-break-up level. Ice jams typically form behind a solid ice cover which persists at Fort Reliance, 5 km downstream of Dawson, but by removing this anchor point, the potential flooding hazard was reduced significantly.

Old Crow

Preliminary indications showed that break-up at Old Crow should be less than normal in terms of severity. Winter temperatures were lower than normal, and combined with the significant snowpack, with its insulating qualities, the ice cover was relatively thin. The Bluefish River, 40 kilometres downstream of Old Crow, is typically a critical anchor point for ice jams which produce flooding in the

community. Seepage from the Bluefish River flows into the Porcupine River freezes to the bed, and builds up in successive layers.

Break-up at Old Crow occurred at 16:30 on May 21, several days past the May 17 historical mean date. Essentially the entire Porcupine River ice cover for 200 km upstream, broke-up and began moving simultaneously. Shortly after this time the water level rose 3.4m in response to an ice jam downstream near the Bluefish River. The jam held for several hours with heavy ice passing the community until 02:00 on the 22nd when the head of the jam reached town causing the water level to rise an additional 1.2 m approaching the top of the bank. The jam broke at 04:00 on the 22nd followed by the unrestricted movement of ice past Old Crow.

Ross River

The Pelly River at Ross River is rising at approximately 15 cm per day and is currently at a level of 2.42 metres, approximately 1.3 metres below bank full stage. The peak water level normally occurs during the first week in June, however due to the cool spring, the peak is expected to be approximately 10 days behind its mean date. For reference purposes the mean peak water level is 3.2 metres while flood stage is 3.74 metres.

Mayo

The Stewart River at Mayo is rising at approximately 15 cm per day and is currently at a level of 5.1 metres, approximately 6.1 metres below bank full stage. The peak water level normally occurs during the second week in June, however due to the cool spring, the peak is expected to be approximately 10 days behind its mean date. For reference purposes the mean peak water level is 7.80 metres while flood stage is 11.17 metres. Prior to the upgrading of the dyke in 1987 the flood stage was 9.97 metres. Recent high water events occurred in 1992 and 1983 when water levels reached 9.73 and 9.44 metres respectively.



Volunteer Recognition

In April, Yukon Commissioner Judy Gingell recognized the services of many volunteers who dedicate countless hours of personal time to help others. Whitehorse District Search and Rescue Training Officer, Al Ekholm was one of the volunteers commemorated at a ceremony which highlighted his long time commitment to developing search and rescue capability in the Yukon. Al's volunteer work also encompasses the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club and the Yukon Outdoors Club.

The Commissioner's Award for Volunteer Service is presented annually.

Congratulations Al!



Great Turnout by SAR Volunteers!

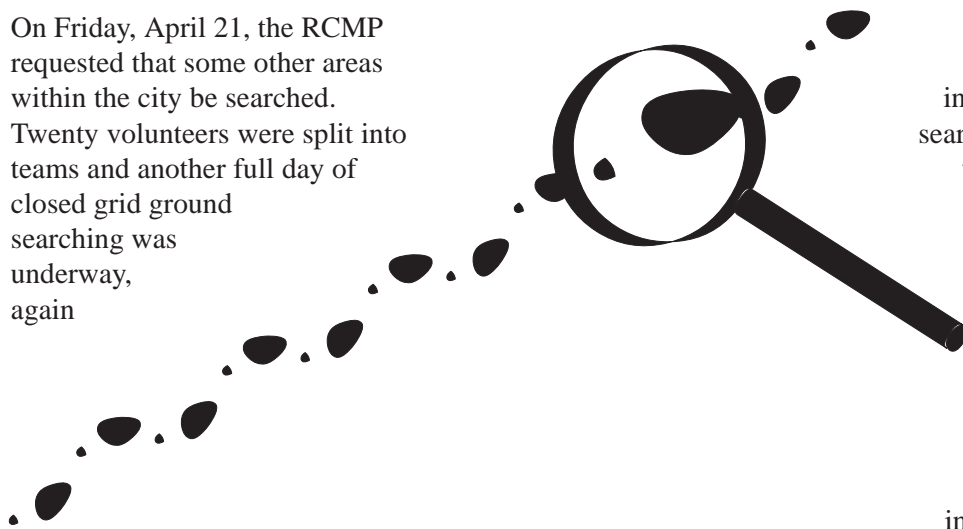
More than twenty dedicated SAR volunteers changed their plans for the Easter long-weekend when the request came in for assistance in a missing person search. On Thursday, April 20, 2000, the RCMP requested the Whitehorse District Search and Rescue Society to assist them in finding a woman, who had been reported missing earlier in the week. By 2:00 in the afternoon, twelve volunteers were ready to go, and ground searches near the Whitehorse Airport were initiated. By 6:00 that evening another 12 people had arrived bringing the total complement to twenty four. Searchers worked under very difficult conditions, as they had to traverse the "clay cliffs" area of Whitehorse, where some snow remained, and the high winds made communications difficult. Two SAR Dog teams were also hard at work searching other areas around the airport. The search continued on the first evening until just after 9:00 pm.

On Friday, April 21, the RCMP requested that some other areas within the city be searched. Twenty volunteers were split into teams and another full day of closed grid ground searching was underway, again

under difficult conditions. By the end of the second day, a huge amount of area around Whitehorse was covered with a probability of detection near 90 %. SAR teams were asked to report at 06:00 hours on Saturday, April 22. The tired eyes were livened up when Cpl. John Sutherland (RCMP, Search Commander) distributed chocolate Easter Eggs. After a short wait, searchers were asked to focus their attention back to the clay cliffs near the south end of town. By this time, it became apparent that searchers were involved in an evidence search as the body of Regina Thyrone had been found, and foul play was suspected.

Although SAR teams did not actually find anything of interest during the search, the fact that such a huge area was covered, allowed RCMP investigators to concentrate their attention in other areas. A

tremendous amount of time was saved, and RCMP were able to gather enough evidence to arrest and charge an individual in the incident. This was the first significant search where Yukon SAR volunteers were asked to participate in a search for evidence. The trust placed on all of the individuals by the RCMP, and their response to it, was commendable. A total of over 450 person/hours of volunteer time was devoted to this search, and serves to promote the dedication of SAR volunteers in the Yukon.



False Distress Costs Money



By Al Ekholm

On August 15, 1996 Whitehorse District Search and Rescue (WDSAR) were called into service to assist the RCMP who had received a 911 call from a radiophone. The caller spoke frantically of a 4 X 4 truck that had rolled over, an unconscious driver and uncertainty about their whereabouts. The only clue searchers had to go on, was that the caller remembered driving by a cemetery.

Although radio direction finding was attempted, RCMP were unable to get a strong enough signal for an accurate bearing.

When WDSAR was mobilized, "we realized this was urgent", said Al Ekholm, Training Officer of WDSAR. Although the area of a possible location was huge based on the limited information we knew, we decided the Grey Mountain area would be our highest priority.

Over the next few days, every topographical inch of Grey Mountain was covered from the ground and the air. Nothing

- no sign that any vehicle had rolled in this area.

The search area was expanded to include Mt. McIntyre, Haeckle Hill and Pilot Mountain.

Late on the third day of the search, after 3500 square kilometres had been covered with no results, and with no one reporting a missing person, the search was called off.

After the search ended, RCMP continued to follow every lead. There was some suspicion that the call may have been a hoax, and after a lengthy investigation, a young man was charged with calling in a false distress.

At a May 3, 2000 court hearing, the youth plead guilty to the charge, and was sentenced to pay \$2,628,03 in compensation, complete 60 hours of community service and serve a 12-month probationary period.



SAR Training Weekend Was a Wet One!

Over 25 SAR volunteers from around the Yukon participated in the semi annual Training Weekend, held at the Cadet Training Camp near Whitehorse. This spring's training was a good opportunity for those needing a refresher in the basic SAR skills to get caught up. It was also a good opportunity for new members to learn some new skills, and get an exposure to what they will need to know.

The training weekend was set up to allow members to get some operational experience in boat operation.

Many of the teams brought their boat to the weekend, and the Yukon Power and Sail Squadron provided instruction in boat maintenance, trailering, and safe operation. Most of the participants were enthusiastic in being able to get out on the lake so early in the year.

In order to put some of the new skills to the test, a mock search was held on Sunday. The scenario was based on a

group of non-English speaking "victims" who had capsized their canoe near Canyon City on the Yukon River. The canoe had flipped the previous day, and the victims were cold, hypothermic and wandering

"aimlessly". The scenario required that search crews would be deployed by boat. Communications was a challenge, and a drop repeater had to be set up to ensure people could communicate through Miles Canyon from the search headquarters which had been set up at Schwatka Lake.

Overall, the weekend was well received. Most participants were

pleased to have some of the courses, and practical sessions held off site from the Cadet Camp, as this provided a new environment to work in. Planning is now underway to make the Fall Training Weekend successful. It is to be held October 20 - 22, 2000, at the Cadet Camp.





Reminders...

- Effective May 1, 2000, the United States government discontinued the use of "Selective Availability" on the Global Positioning System thereby improving the accuracy and stability of civilian GPS handheld receivers. Accuracy of these units, as a result, have improved from +/- 100 metres to less than 10 metres. It is important to remember however, that a GPS is just one of the tools a person can use to navigate through the forest. Complete reliance on this type of a device can lead to problems if it fails for any reason. A map and a compass are still important components of any properly prepared field gear pack.

- The 2001/2002 SAR New Initiatives Fund (NIF) call letters and applications for SAR funding is out. The deadline for applications to be received by the Emergency Measures Branch is July 1, 2000. Instructions for completing the proposal can be found at the National Search and Rescue Secretariat web site at: <http://www.nss.gc.ca/main.htm>.



Update: In the last MEMO Newsletter, the Chair of the Search and Rescue Advisory Committee - Yukon, asked for your feedback on the direction this committee should take. The results of this poll were to be included in this edition, however, very little feedback has been received. Without support from individuals and teams in the SAR community, the future of Yukon-wide SAR volunteer representation is unclear. If you wish to comment on this issue, please forward your comments in writing to Mr. Rick Harder, Southeast Yukon Search and Rescue, P.O. Box 50, Watson Lake, YT, Y0A 1C0.



Situation Report

April 20 - 22, 2000

A missing person search was conducted by the Whitehorse District Search and Rescue Society in conjunction with the RCMP. See the related story in this issue.

May 4 - 5, 2000

The RCMP requested assistance from the Beaver Creek Search and Rescue Society in their investigation to an abandoned vehicle near the Kluane River. Initially suspected as a possible drowning, no victim or missing person had been reported. There was no evidence to support an ongoing search, so resources were released on the second day. A full ground search did not occur.



Coming Events

2000

- June 20/21 Basic Emergency Plans & Ops. Dawson City
- June 28 TDG - 1st Responder Awareness Whitehorse
- Aug.28-Sep.1 Emergency Operations Centre Whitehorse
- Oct. 3 TDG - 1st Responder Awareness Haines Jct.
- Oct. 24/25 Basic Emergency Plans & Ops. Whitehorse
- Nov. 23 TDG - 1st Responder Awareness Whitehorse

EMO

2000

- Sep. 9/10 SAR Team Leader Watson Lake
- Sep. 16/17 Rope Safety and Evacuation Whitehorse
- Oct. 11-15 SARSCENE Workshop Laval, Que.
- Oct. 20-22 SAR Training Weekend Whitehorse

SAR

2001

- Jan. 25 TDG - 1st Responder Awareness Whitehorse
- Mar. 7/8 Basic Emergency Plans & Ops. Whitehorse

EMO

2001

- Feb. 17/18 Search Management Whitehorse
- Mar. 17/18 Team Leader Whitehorse
- Apr. 21/22 GPS Navigation Whitehorse
- May 11-13 SAR Training Weekend Whitehorse
- June 2/3 Tracker 1 Whitehorse

SAR

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



The editors gratefully acknowledge the support and contributions made by numerous members of EMO to this issue of the Yukon's Emergency Measures Organization Newsletter.

Additional Copies can be obtained by writing to:

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