

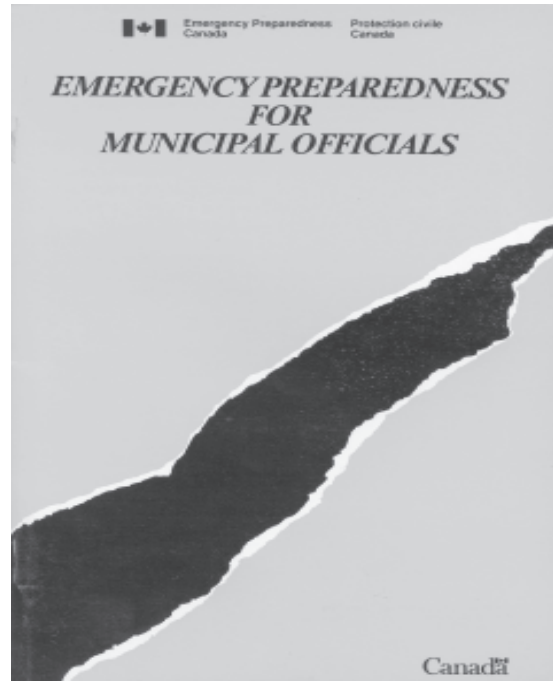
Emergency Planning for Communities

Under the Yukon *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, Municipal governments are required to establish a municipal civil emergency plan. Every incorporated community in the Yukon has a plan in place now. While most of these plans are very current and up to date, regular refreshing and exercising needs to be done in order to provide personnel with the information they will need to respond to an emergency. Emergency plans typically include such things as:

- An organizational structure which will be in effect during an emergency
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each of the functions
- A communications plan for advising members of the Emergency Operations Center staff, and other agencies which might be involved in a response
- How the public will be informed
- An analysis of the hazards surrounding a community and the risk to public safety
- Specific contingency plans for each of the most likely disasters
- A list of resources available for use during an emergency, and contact information to acquire the needed resources.

A letter has been sent out recently to encourage communities to ensure emergency plans are reviewed, updated and exercised where necessary. Assistance may be available with funding under the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program, (see *Reminder*, this page).

In October, municipal elections will be held across the territory. This would be a terrific opportunity to bring community emergency preparedness to the forefront, and new council members will need to be involved in the planning. Further information on the role of elected officials in emergency planning can be obtained by contacting EMO.



REMINDER

Applications for funding under the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program must be submitted to the Emergency Measures Branch by October 31st. Yukon Government Departments, Municipalities and First Nations are eligible to apply for funding to undertake projects such as the development of emergency plans, emergency preparedness training, or purchase of equipment for telecommunications, Emergency Operations Centres or other specialized areas. A specific "Call Letter" will be distributed, which will provide additional information and application requirements. Further details can be obtained by contacting the Emergency Measures Branch.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**Water Levels
Uncommonly
High ... page 2**

**Canadian Forces
Clarify Roll of
Rangers ... page 3**

**It's Flu
Season Again
... page 4**

**National GSAR
Conference Held
... page 6**

**New Initiatives
Fund Proposals
... page 7**

Water Levels Uncommonly High

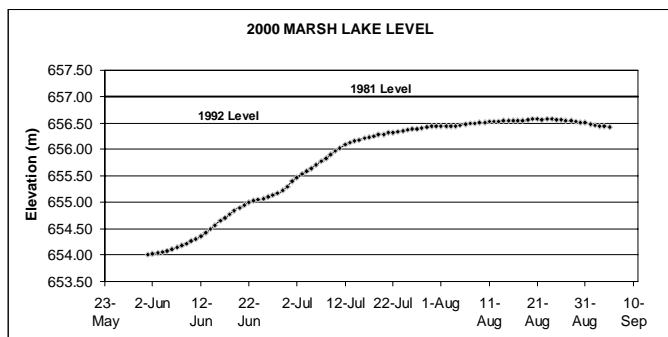
It is no secret that the Yukon experienced one of the wettest summers on record. Normally, the summer skies are filled with smoke from nearby forest fires, however this was not the case in 2000. Instead, the Emergency Measures Branch received phone calls from numerous people concerned about water levels near permanent and recreational properties along various lakeshores.

The area around Whitehorse received more than double the amount of precipitation in August than what is considered normal. More than 80 millimeters of rain fell, and there were only 11 days in the month, which did not receive precipitation. This came after previous months where normal rain amounts were generally above average.

The majority of concern came from residents of Marsh Lake. What now appears to be the third highest lake level recorded, came in conjunction with strong southerly winds, which could



combine to inflict serious property damage. Fortunately, there was no wide spread damage where properties were situated away from the high water mark. EMO was not required to initiate a response. Instead, information was released through the media to inform the public of steps they should take to protect their own property, sandbags were made available to those who required them.



(DIAND - Water Resources)

The keystone of emergency preparedness in Canada is the concept that; it is the individual which has the first responsibility for their own preparedness. In a case where more widespread effects are evident, then it is the local government or municipality that should assist with relief. Once a municipality or local government is unable to cope, the territory will provide additional resources. Clearly it is up to the individual to, first identify what risks they may be exposed to, then to take appropriate steps to minimize the impact of those risks.



Updated Compass Declination

By Al Ekholm
Whitehorse SAR

We all are aware Magnetic Declination is in constant change and every so often the compasses that are used have to be updated. Below is a list of current magnetic declination in the main communities of the Yukon. It is suggested that all SAR compasses are set for your communities. If you are using a GPS and compass combination you will be more accurate.

As of this year, the following should be the declination settings on your compass. Also remember it is **“east declination”**: Beaver Creek 26 °, Carcross 25 °, Carmacks 26 °, Dawson City 27 °, Faro 27 °, Haines Junction 24 °, Mayo 27 °, Old Crow 30 °, Ross River 27 °, Teslin 26 °, Watson Lake 26 °, Whitehorse 26 °.

Provided by the WDSAR Research and Development Team.



Canadian Forces Clarify Roll of Rangers

By Lt. Mark Gough
Canadian Forces, Northern Area

Canadian Forces Northern Area Headquarters has been informed recently that there are misconceptions within the public as to the role of Canadian Rangers in Search and Rescue. This article will address some concerns regarding these misconceptions and attempt to clarify the role the Rangers play in their local communities.

The role of the Canadian Rangers is to provide a military presence in the sparsely settled northern coastal and isolated areas of Canada that cannot be covered conveniently or economically by other elements of the Canadian Forces. In doing so, the Rangers perform a variety of tasks. These include:

- Reporting unusual or suspicious activities;
- Acting as guides and instructors for southern-based Canadian Forces units;
- Conducting Sovereignty Operations;
- Conducting patrols and providing initial Canadian Forces reaction to any incursion into their area;
- Visiting North Warning System sites and Air Force Forward Operating Locations to monitor their condition; and
- Support the Canadian Forces in the event of an emergency in their local area.

Over the years, the Canadian Forces have incorporated limited search and rescue training for the Rangers. By organizing the training in this manner, the Canadian Forces are able to combine several different skills important to military operations. Some of these skills include navigation, communications, leadership and movement on the land. However, it must be noted that the Rangers do not have a specific mandate or responsibility for Search and Rescue.

Within Canada, the Canadian military is responsible for air and marine Search and Rescue. For example if you crashed in a plane or were out fishing and got lost at sea, it is the respon-

sibility of the Canadian Forces to come to your assistance. However, ground Search and Rescue is the responsibility of the territorial or provincial authorities. Typically this service is provided through the police force.



In some instances in the past RCMP members have approached the Rangers in the communities to participate in Search and Rescue because they are a formed group of trained individuals who can organize themselves very quickly to aid in a search.

Rangers are encouraged to use the military equipment that is issued to them in the performance of this community volunteer service. The Canadian Forces condones this activity because the Rangers are performing an essential volunteer service to benefit their community. However, it must be noted that the Rangers can only be called out officially by the Canadian Forces, not by the communities or the RCMP.

In the Yukon there are volunteer Ground Search and Rescue teams organized throughout the territory. This program was started in 1990 and there are currently over 550 volunteers in the various communities. Organized by the territorial Emergency Measures Organization, it is these organizations that are called out initially to respond to search and rescue requests and are led by local RCMP.

Rangers may participate in Search and Rescue primarily as community volunteers and are encouraged to use their skills to assist the local Ground Search and Rescue teams. At the same time there is a mechanism in place whereby the Rangers could be called out by the military to assist in Search and Rescue. This occurs very rarely. When it does happen, it is coordinated through one of the national Rescue Coordination Centres.

In summary, the Canadian Rangers play a vital role in the protection of Canadian sovereignty in the North. As concerned citizens, Rangers also contribute to their communities by volunteering to participate in Search and Rescue.



REMINDER

SAR Societies, which have not yet returned their signed copies of the Memorandum of Understanding, are reminded that expenses cannot be paid until they are received at the Emergency Measures Branch

It's Flu Season

By Dr. Frank Timmerman
Medical Officer of Health

Hein Thet could see only his own bare feet moving forward, step by step in the mud. He could see the reddish squish of mud and twigs between his toes. The rest of the world was lost except for the background roar of a crowd of human voices somewhere above him. Why were they so loud? There was also a tightness in his chest and he was aware that there was difficulty with his breathing. He felt no pain – no panic. He felt nothing.

Fergus Carpenter stepped through the crowd of Burmese refugees gathered around the thin figure lying in the mud. They moved aside and fell back a little and were silent and watchful in the tropical rain. He squatted in the mud and felt for a pulse in the scrawny neck. This was more to distract himself rather than to find out anything. He could see that there was still life. Breathing was laboured but there was no response to his touch. Another one. He stepped back and some of the men came forward and lifted the old man, carrying him shoulder high to the hospital tent. Fergus knew he couldn't last long.

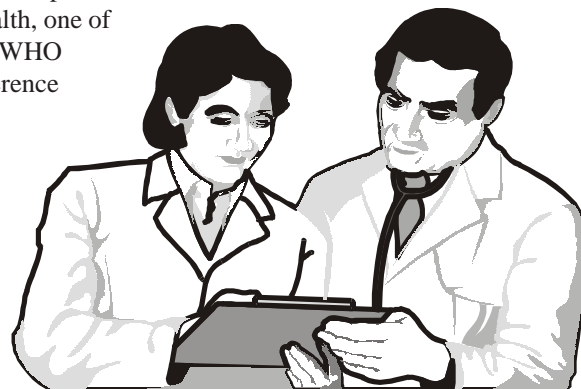
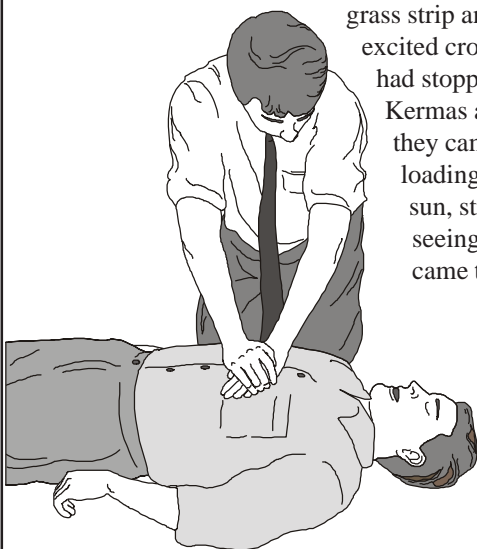
The next morning the rain had stopped and the hot mid-morning sun set the foliage and the paths steaming. A Cessna Caravan put down on the grass strip and was surrounded by an excited crowd even before its propeller had stopped. Fergus saw Barbara Kermas and John McArlan duck as they came down the steps from the loading door. They blinked in the sun, stretched, stamped their feet and seeing his head above the crowd, came through towards him. A quick

handshake and Fergus hurried them to the tent. They pushed through the canvas flap into the stifling humidity. The filtered light was an odd colour. They smelt illness, sweat, urine. It was quiet in the tent except for the occasional grunt or cough from the line of canvas stretchers along the walls. They stood still saying nothing. Fergus turned and they followed him out to the smaller tent next door.

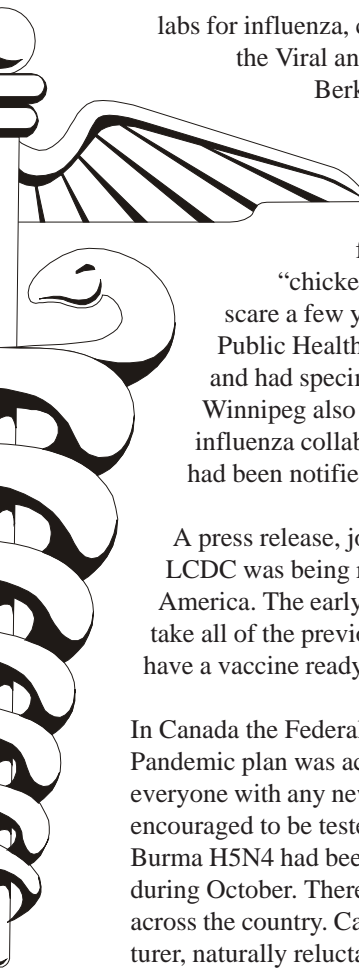
"Sixteen deaths since Thursday. Three among our own local staff", said Fergus, "and they're all the same. Most of them are from the villages across the border. They come in ones and twos. There are many more than them".

"It's A – H5N4, not like anything we've ever seen" she could barely hear John over the poor connection. It occurred to Barbara that the line from Atlanta to Brussels should be better than that, even if she was on her cell phone on the sidewalk. "Can't be" she shouted, "Who ever heard of H5N4? Is that what you said?" The line came clear as she walked on towards the MSF office. "Yes, that's what I said – confirmed. Jim Kuber and his guys checked it from another one of Fergus' specimens. The H5 is on but the neuraminidase is still in some doubt. Nothing we've ever seen. For now it's N4"

The Virus Isolation Laboratory of the New York State Department of Health, one of the WHO reference



son Again...



labs for influenza, confirmed Jim's findings as did the Viral and Rickettsial Disease Lab in Berkley. Sequencing of the neuraminidase was not yet confirmed but it was definitely completely new. The H5 component was familiar from the Hong Kong "chicken flu" that created a minor scare a few years earlier. The Ministry of Public Health in Thailand had been notified and had specimens. The LCDC laboratory in Winnipeg also had specimens. All 110 WHO influenza collaborating centres in 83 countries had been notified. Could this be the "big one?"

A press release, jointly prepared by CDC and LCDC was being readied for release in North America. The early consensus was that it would take all of the previously estimated 6 months to have a vaccine ready for distribution.

In Canada the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Pandemic plan was activated. Despite the fact that everyone with any new respiratory illness was encouraged to be tested, only three cases of A-Thai-Burma H5N4 had been confirmed in Vancouver during October. There were no others reported from across the country. Canada's only vaccine manufacturer, naturally reluctant to divert all its resources to H5N4 vaccine production, responded to an emergency offer of partnership with the Government of Canada. Target date for a safe, effective vaccine ready for public distribution was the end of March.

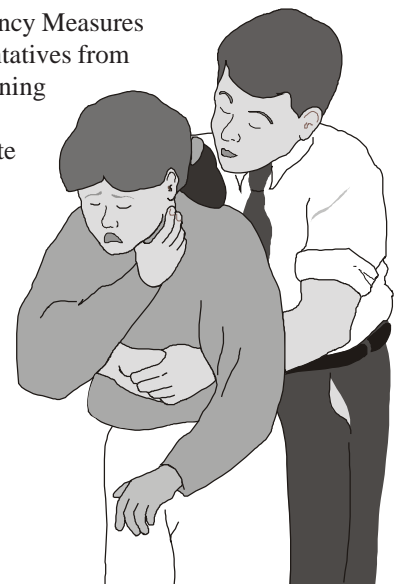
Capacity would begin at 3 million doses per month.



Fall was closing in on the Yukon Territory. The Pandemic Influenza Committee knew that Yukoners would not be spared. They calculated that, in a full pandemic with A-Thai-Burma H5N4, about 20,000 Yukoners would fall ill over about 4 months. The sparse population might result in a flatter curve with cases spread over more time. Five to eight thousand people could need antibiotics. Between three and five thousand people over a period of four months could need hospital or extra-mural hospital care for an average of 5 days each. A standard epidemic curve constructed by the Centers for Disease Control and fitted to the Yukon population suggested that, in the peak two weeks, about 250 hospital beds would be needed. Oxygen supply would be a problem for those not in the Whitehorse General Hospital. There was a stockpile of antivirals but these would be adequate only for those in absolutely essential services. New orders via private pharmacies were now out of the question.

And so the story goes...

This is not a scenario we would ever like to see happen in the Yukon, or anywhere else for that matter. Fortunately, there is a Pandemic Influenza Committee established within the Yukon, and this committee has worked through this type of an event, and is developing contingency plans to minimize the impact on residents. The Emergency Measures Organization consists of representatives from all agencies with emergency planning and response roles. Members of the medical community participate in coordinated planning, and Branch staff will be participating on the Pandemic Influenza Committee.



National GSAR Training Meeting Held

A variety of search and rescue training issues were discussed at a national meeting hosted by the National Search and Rescue Secretariat and held in Ottawa on July 20th and 21st. Representatives from most of the provinces and territories, except Manitoba (ongoing major search) and BC (new staff change over) were represented by people from various agencies. Participants from policing authorities, provincial/territorial governments, and provincial volunteer associations were in attendance to share and discuss numerous issues surrounding search and rescue training. As the meeting progressed, it became very obvious that many issues were common across the country, and many were being worked on concurrently by different jurisdictions. The conference was a terrific opportunity to share solutions, and collective issues, which require additional work. Some of the common key challenges identified were:

- Development of a common glossary of terms
- Mandates and responsibility for costs are unclear
- Recognition of what constitutes a “qualified” instructor
- Authority’s expectations of volunteers. Need to balance demands
- Use of untrained “spontaneous” volunteers
- Authority’s involvement in volunteer group’s internal issues
- Funding for SAR training
- Recognition of volunteer’s level of participation to avoid “burnout”
- Alternate methods of testing and evaluation based on literacy

Along with these, and other issues, there was a lot of discussion about development of a national training framework that all jurisdictions can work towards. A training standard at the basic search and rescue level is currently very similar, and there was thought that a national standard could be developed. Most provinces and territories agreed that there was still much work to do within individual jurisdictions prior to considering a national approach. Although the idea has merit, it will likely

be some time before work continues on a national standard.

Many provinces and territories look upon the training and certification program currently in place in the Yukon, favorably. Interest was shown in the prerequisite requirements for advanced training, and the need for maintaining currency in various SAR positions. Although there is still work to be done to



complete this program, the Yukon is well on its way to being the first jurisdiction in Canada with a comprehensive certification program.

A New Initiatives Fund project was approved to sponsor these meetings for three years. These meetings are valuable, as they allow a coordinated approach to resolving common issues across the country. Mr. Wayne Merry has normally represented the Yukon at these conferences, and his involvement is certainly appreciated. Although not able to attend the recent meeting, his comments and thought were tabled for consideration.



REMINDER



Outdoor enthusiasts and suppliers should ensure they have contingency plans in place when planning travel in isolated areas of the Yukon. Alternate pick-up times and locations, communications and extra provisions are important if things go wrong. Rescue costs can be very high.

New Initiatives Fund Proposals Submitted

The Emergency Measures Branch has agreed to sponsor two proposals for funding under the New Initiatives Fund program overseen by the National Search and Rescue Secretariat. The deadline for applications to the NSS was August 1, 2000, for projects to commence in the fiscal year 2001/2002 beginning April 1, 2001.

The two proposals now being considered for the Yukon are:

- Yukon Ground SAR Certification Program Enhancement
- Yukon SAR Dog Handler Qualifications Development

Both of these projects are intended to provide volunteers and other members of the SAR community with a clearly defined process and set of goals for recognition of achievements. If approved, both of these projects will require that volunteers from around the Yukon, are consulted with to ensure they are acceptable and useful.



**SEARCH
AND
RESCUE**



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The *Certification Program* project will complete an analysis of the current standards, training, experience and ability profiles for each SAR position. A clearly defined “job description” for each potential function in a SAR organization will be developed, and a process for the proper documentation of experience and skills gained will be completed for recognizing an individual’s achievements. A “stand-alone” Certification Program manual with computer software support for data entry will be the expected outcome.

The purpose of the *SAR Dog Handler Qualification Development* project, is to review the current volunteer canine service to the RCMP, and develop a new structure of training and

operation for an increased level of efficiency and dependability. The project will review existing EMO requirements, qualifications from other volunteer organizations around North America, and consult with the RCMP and key SAR volunteer members. Using this information, a set of handler qualifications will be developed which will allow handlers to train toward more realistic search conditions. Criteria for evaluating a team’s readiness for RCMP validation will be established, and a standard will be set for meeting currency requirements.

There is still a lengthy process for these proposals to go through prior to final approval for funding. In October, they will be scored and ranked by departments and organizations responsible for the NIF. The Yukon sponsored projects are compared with many other proposals from around the country. A Merit Board will meet in the middle of November to assess

each of the proposals’ abilities to meet the priorities of the program, and a letter will be forwarded to the Lead Minister responsible for SAR with recommendations for funding. Prior to April 1, an announcement will be made to each sponsoring agency confirming if their proposal has been approved or not.

It is intended that both of these projects will be done in consultation with as wide a representation of the SAR community as possible. Input into these projects from volunteers is important, as individual commitments to Yukon SAR must be recognized when guidelines are developed. This is another good opportunity to approach your SAR Society and ask about volunteer voice on the Volunteer SAR Advisory Committee – Yukon.



REMINDER



Winter driving conditions will soon be upon us. There are a number of things you should do, to ensure safe travel, when the rain we have been getting turns to snow and ice.

- **Prepare your vehicle** - Battery - Ignition - Lights - Brakes - Tires - Heating system
- **Prepare yourself** - Shovel - Traction aids - Tow chain or rope - Extra clothing and foot wear - Emergency food pack - Booster cables - Ice scraper and brush - Matches and candles - Flashlight - First aid kit - Blanket
- **Prepare for the Trip** - Keep to main roads - Wear warm clothes - Drive with caution - Don’t “press on” - Avoid passing another vehicle - Let someone know where you’re going - **BUCKLE UP!**

Situation Reports

June 16 - Ground water levels began to rise in the Klondike Valley community of Rock Creek. A team of community representatives coordinated assistance for residents, and steps were taken to ensure the health and safety of all persons.

June 20 - The Carmacks RCMP participated in the rescue of an individual in the Tantalus Bute area.

July 7 - The Haines Junction RCMP participated in the rescue of rafters from the Tatshenshini River by helicopter (photo at right).



Photo by Gord McRae, BC Parks

July 16 - The RCMP assisted in the rescue of two canoeists on the Wolf River. They had missed a portage, slightly upstream of waterfalls. They spent one night on an island in the middle of the river, and were picked up by helicopter the following day.

Aug. 15 - Carcross SAR, and the Marsh Lake Volunteer Fire Department were tasked to assist the RCMP in accessing the site of a plane crash at the south end of Teslin Lake.

Aug. 15 - Carcross, Teslin and Whitehorse SAR Societies were tasked to search for a missing person in the Squanga Lake area. The mushroom-picker had been overdue for two nights, and was found in good condition on the morning of the 16th by helicopter.

Aug. 24 - Preparations were underway to search for two canoeists failing to meet at their pick up location after canoeing the Bonnet Plume River. The men arrived in Ft. McPherson NWT, later that week.

Sept. 14 - Two canoeists visiting from Germany were reported overdue while on a trip on the Liard River. Watson Lake and Whitehorse RCMP were involved in the preliminary search. RCMP Air Services' Twin Otter "MPL" and crew were able to locate the two males less than 20 miles into their 200 mile trip. They had overturned in the canoe, lost all of their gear and were found on the riverbank with only a lighter and a knife. They had been there for 9 days. Weather in the area was wet and snowy. The outfitter chartered a helicopter for the rescue.



Coming Events

2000 EMO
 Oct. 3 TDG – 1st Responder Awareness – Haines Junction
 Oct. 24–25 Basic Emergency Plans and Operations – Whitehorse
 Nov. 23 TDG – 1st Responder Awareness – Whitehorse
 Dec. 11–15 Emergency Operations Centre Mgmt. – Whitehorse

2000 SAR
 Oct. 11–15 SARSCENE Workshop – Laval, Que.
 Oct. 20–22 SAR Training Weekend – Whitehorse

2001 EMO
 Jan. 25 TDG – 1st Responder Awareness – Whitehorse
 Mar. 7–8 Basic Emergency Plans and Operations – Whitehorse
 Mar. 13 TDG – 1st Responder Awareness – Whitehorse
 Apr. 26 TDG – 1st Responder Awareness – TBA
 June 5 TDG – 1st Responder Awareness – TBA

2001 SAR
 Feb. 17–18 SAR Manager – Whitehorse
 Mar. 17–18 Team Leader – Whitehorse
 Apr. 21–22 GPS Navigation – Whitehorse
 May 11–13 Spring Training Weekend – Whitehorse
 June 2–3 Tracker 1 - Whitehorse



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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