

SARSCENE 2001

Eagerly anticipated by Yukon's search and rescue community, SARSCENE—Canada's largest annual search and rescue conference—was held in Whitehorse September 12 – 15. Four hundred volunteer, military, provincial, territorial and national search and rescue workers were scheduled to descend on Whitehorse for four days of sharing knowledge, honing techniques and networking with SAR personnel from across Canada, and some from the U.S. and overseas.

Due to the events in the U.S. on Sept 11th and subsequent air travel difficulties, close to half of conference attendees could not make the trip to Whitehorse. Conference organizers made some minor modifications to the plan—some workshops were revised and several presenters stood in for those who could not attend. Despite the unusual circumstances, the conference was a resounding success.

The National Search and Rescue Secretariat puts on the conference each year. It provides an opportunity for the local host society to benefit by helping to coordinate activities and recover some costs through registration. This was the first time SARSCENE has been hosted north of 60. The conference was held at Mount McIntyre, with some additional venues used for social and outdoor events.

Over four days delegates chose from a diverse selection of presentations and workshops, a trade show, demonstrations, the SAR Games, and the ever-popular social events associated with SARSCENE. Members of the host organization, Whitehorse District Search and Rescue, dedicated hundreds of volunteer hours to the planning and logistics of the conference, and Emergency Measures Branch liaised between the conference and supporting agencies. The RCMP, DND, Parks Canada and the City of Whitehorse also contributed considerable



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ABOVE: Instructor Dick Rice teaching rescue techniques at a sweeper on the Atlin River.

BELOW: Course participants with the Carcross rescue boat.

Swift Water Rescue Course in Carcross

Over the August 19 – 21 weekend, the Carcross Area Rescue Team Association (CARTA) hosted an intensive three-day course in swift water rescue adapted for emergency response in a power boat. The instructor of this Rescue 3 International accredited course, Dick Rice of Atlin, received rave reviews from workshop participants.

Todd Powell, who organized the event for CARTA, was enthusiastic and very positive about the course outcome. “I think every SAR team in the Yukon should take this course,” he says without hesitation, “Every member of our group is now capable and confident of carrying out a rescue in swift moving water from a power boat.”

Seven members of CARTA, one member of Whistehorse District SAR and one member of Kluane SAR took part in this intensive course involving one day of classroom instruction followed by two days developing and practicing water rescue skills. After spending Friday in a classroom in



Carcross, the group moved to the fast flowing Class II waters of the Atlin River. This river presented the group with excellent conditions for rescue training—it has lots of sweepers and other obstacles, and although swift the river allows passage of power boats. The group was also conducting their exercises during a high water period.

The course focused on self-rescue first, then moved onto water dynamics, handling hazards and obstacles, using basic rescue equipment, setting up technical rope systems, rescue and recovery from shore, boat operations, controlling in-water contact rescues and more. An exciting part of the course came when they applied river reading and running from online to offline, which involved seeking out those ‘gnarly’ areas on the river that present greater challenges to rescuers.

“Though participants came with a very wide range of experience, Dick was capable of bringing everyone to standard levels of competency,” says Powell, “Each of us learned to surf eddies and holes, work around logs, and how to keep the boat and crew safe while making the boat an effective rescue platform.”

The course was very demanding and exhausting, but was lauded by participants for its thoroughness, safety and capable instruction. A month later, four members of CARTA gave a demonstration for SARSCENE attendees at the Yukon River Intake. No other SAR group in the Yukon has received swift water rescue training with a power boat, but given the reception to this course and the popularity of river travel in the territory, this may soon change.



Looking Within

In the wake of the September terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, many people in communities across North America are thinking about safety, security and search and rescue like never before. The magnitude of the attacks and the immediate impact felt by millions of people resulted in unprecedented mobilizations and support for organizations like the Red Cross and search and rescue personnel.

The tragic events in the U.S. may have seemed far away from our somewhat isolated and peaceful territory, but the arrival of military fighter jets escorting two Korean Air Lines 747s to Whitehorse briefly shattered the quiet, remote vision of the North that many of us harbour. For several hours, an international incident played out in our midst that—although determined not to be a real threat—brought world events into our own backyard.

Yukon emergency personnel responded in a number of ways, from carrying out a major evacuation to caring for almost 200 KAL passengers and crew. At the community level, Whitehorse residents experienced firsthand a major evacuation. Offers of help poured in, whether to donate blood, provide clothing, food and accommodation to stranded visitors, or contribute money. Our local Red Cross is still collecting donations—they report an unprecedented response from Yukoners.

The heightened awareness of emergency services that has resulted from these incidents presents us with an excellent opportunity to promote emergency preparedness, volunteer recruitment and search and rescue programs. Emergency Measures Branch intends to use this opportunity to review



plans, attract volunteers and build stronger ties to other agencies, and in particular to strengthen public awareness and communications initiatives.

Local SAR groups might want to consider holding a public demonstration or hosting an Open House. Emergency services personnel could take the opportunity to engage community leaders about emergency planning and communications. Communities might find it timely to conduct an emergency preparedness exercise, or distribute current information to residents.

Whether through our dedicated volunteers, committed leaders or trained emergency response professionals, involvement of communities is the key. We have been presented with an extraordinary opportunity to encourage this involvement and build partners in emergency preparedness and response. For ideas, resources or other information contact EMO at (867) 667-5220.



National Training Strategy Outcomes

Over the past year, Yukon EMB has been working with Emergency Preparedness Canada and other provincial and territorial representatives to develop a National Training Strategy for emergency management training. Kevin Wallinger, the Branch's planning and training coordinator, has participated in the National Training Strategy working group on behalf of the Yukon. This fall, the working group wrapped up its efforts with the release of the completed strategy.

The goal of the strategy is to offer progressive, high-quality training through the creation of 'nationally recognized courses' that complement specific local training. A national training committee will coordinate multi-jurisdictional projects and develop standards and tools, and identify

nationally recognized courses. These courses will provide a framework to address areas of mutual need and feature core content relevant to all or most jurisdictions. The Canadian Emergency Preparedness College will take a leadership role in implementing the strategy.

The National Training Strategy represents a coordinated effort to establish long-term nation-wide training goals and objectives for the next five years. For Yukon's emergency response community, this means that local needs and concerns can be incorporated into national level training. The College continues to refine their delivery of emergency preparedness training and there are opportunities to provide nationally recognized training here in Yukon without the need to send people out of the territory.



Thank You!

More than one hundred volunteers and staff worked around the clock in a coordinated effort to care for the Korean Air Lines passengers. Emergency Social Services extends a special thanks to the staff of the five hotels (the Gold Rush Inn, the River View, the Bonanza Inn, the Westmark Klondike and the Westmark Whitehorse), Red Cross volunteers, the Salvation Army, translators, the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, government staff and many other volunteers.

Korean A



On September 11th, the city of Whitehorse became an unsuspecting participant in a chain of world events. Within hours of the attacks in New York and Washington D.C., North American flights were grounded, airspace across the continent was closed, and Canada became the alternate destination for hundreds of U.S.-bound aircraft.

Whitehorse first prepared for diverted aircraft, but the situation became more complex and serious with the news that a Korean Air Lines 747 was bound for the Yukon and was believed to be hijacked. What was initially a civil response led by the airport manager became an armed response under command of the RCMP.

With initial reports that up to 10 large passenger aircraft could be diverted to Whitehorse, Emergency Social Services (ESS) began to mobilize plans to receive up to 3000 displaced travelers. When the numbers changed and a hijacking became part of the picture, Emergency Health Services (EHS) became involved and the overall response had to be adjusted to prepare for possible mass medical response. This flipped again when the plane was safely on the ground. Throughout the situation, the Joint Emergency Operations Coordination Centre was activated to support the ESS/EHS response.

All afternoon the ESS team—including Health and Social Services staff, the Red Cross, Salvation Army and numerous volunteers—made plans to house and feed the passengers and crews. Emergency Measures Organization, the Department of Tourism, RCMP and DND also became involved. ESS sought to provide the greatest level of comfort to passengers, so an initial plan to use the Cadet Camp was dropped once enough hotel rooms were confirmed.

The decision was made to transport the passengers from the airport to the Beringia Centre, which proved to be an excellent Reception Centre. Everyone filed into the theatre where the head of ESS—assisted by six translators—delivered information about the situation, and explained the arrangements made for the stranded travellers. Food prepared by Whitehorse Hospital was served afterwards, community health nurses were present, and Red Cross volunteers and ESS staff conducted registration and hotel assignments.

Because they had not had any access to news, passengers could learn about the day's tragic events from a television that had been set up for them. As the plane was bound for New York, many passengers resided in or had connections to New York City. To deal with stress and personal issues, RCMP victim services volunteers and ESS mental health professionals were available to passengers. The displays of the Beringia Centre provided a welcome distraction for many.

Passengers had deplaned with no personal items, not even handbags. Nurses worked hard to meet any medical needs, and diapers and other basic necessities were provided. The next day 'Comfort Kits' were available, and the Salvation Army provided clothing from the ESS Reception Centre set up at the Gold Rush Inn. An Inquiry Centre was established to field calls coming into the Yukon from anxious family and friends, refreshments and updates were available around the clock, and tourism information was provided. The Minister of Tourism appeared with a map to show the travelers where they were as, not surprisingly, many passengers did not know anything about the Yukon. Throughout the situation, Yukoners made all kinds of generous offers. For example, the City of Whitehorse took KAL passengers on bus tours, and

Airlines Incident



Photo: Ron McFadyen

TOP: Korean Air Lines 747 on approach to Whitehorse International Airport. **ABOVE:** One of two KAL 747s on the tarmac. **BELOW:** Stranded passengers congregating at the downtown reception centre.

several ethnic community groups welcomed some of them for meals.

Over the three days that the KAL passengers were in their care, ESS had to adjust their plans seven times due to changes in departure decisions. In addition to emergency personnel, between 75 and 100 volunteers were involved. The atmosphere of the downtown Reception Centre was positive and lively, where passengers could share stories, find support and meet Yukoners. Despite the difficult circumstances, volunteers received an outpouring of appreciation and noted that many passengers commented on the Yukon's beautiful natural environment and our 'low stress lifestyle'!

Korean Air Lines was in contact with ESS throughout the situation, and the airline covered all costs associated with their passengers and crew. A third plane—the Condor airliner from Europe—was also grounded in Whitehorse for several days. But because many were destined for the Yukon and the airline had local contacts, Condor took care of all their own dislocated passengers and crew.

In the coming months, participating agencies will have many opportunities to review and learn from these events. Debriefings will identify areas for improvement and things that went well—some suggestions are already being acted upon. A public report will also be compiled and tabled in the legislature. ❄️



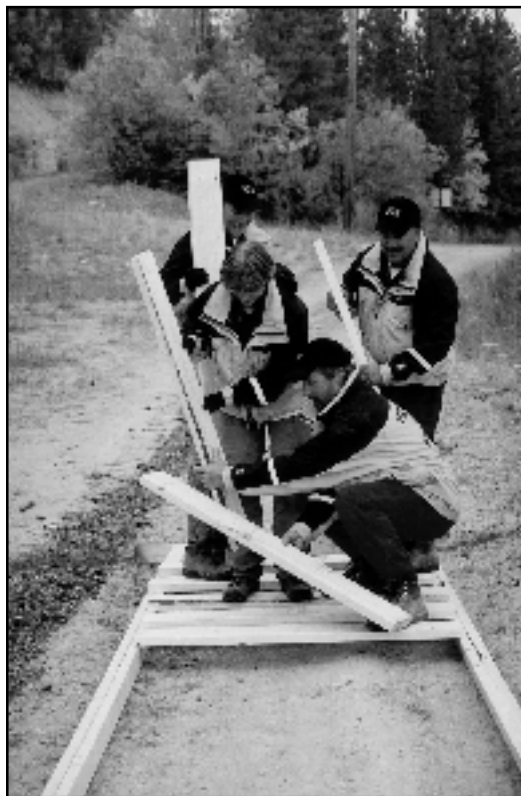
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resources to help produce a successful conference.

This year's lineup of workshops was very well received and commended for its content and high quality. SAR professionals from across Canada and overseas delivered workshops on topics ranging from mobile communications and avalanche safety to SAR in Europe and urban SAR. In addition to giving members of Yukon search and rescue community a unique opportunity to participate in a national SAR conference, the event also highlighted the tremendous experience, skills and knowledge base of the territory's search and rescue personnel. More than a dozen Yukon presenters delivered workshops, making a strong impression with delegates and raising the profile of Yukon search and rescue expertise and operations.

Veteran mountaineer Wayne Merry of Atlin told of his 1957 first ascent of El Capitan, and legendary survival expert Monty Alford made a thorough presentation on winter survival techniques. Neil Hartling gave a presentation on SAR operations involving outfitters and guides, Gerry Whitley shared information about searching for lost aircraft in the Yukon, and Bob Daffe delivered a workshop on training that saves the rescuer. Barney Smith profiled the latest in bear safety, and Kirstie Simpson presented the essentials of puppy selection for SAR dog training. First Aid trainer Rob Robinson presented on assessment and decision making when treating sick and injured in the wilderness. Eleanor Millard shared important information on drowning prevention in the North, and Rick Staley and Lloyd Freese made a presentation on SAR and public safety from a Kluane National Park perspective. Numerous other Yukon SAR personnel participated in workshops, many 'pinch-hitting' for cancelled sessions and sitting for panel discussions.

Five teams participated in the SARSCENE Games on the first day of the conference, performing all kinds of challenging outdoor exercises including navigation, First Aid, search planning, evidence search and a hilarious mystery event. This year's winning team hailed from Calgary (Foothills SAR), with WDSAR making a strong effort but winning the 'red lantern' award. Thursday, Friday and Saturday morning



ABOVE Team competing on the *Mystery Exercise* in the SAR Games (page 1 photo shows the solution!).

involved a full complement of workshops and an ongoing trade show.

With such expertise gathered in one place, SARSCENE was an excellent venue for training. Twenty-eight dog handlers and numerous dogs from across Canada and the U.S. came together in Whitehorse for opportunities to train. ERI International, a training group from Washington State, presented an adapted version of their intensive *Search Management for the Initial Response* workshop. Three exciting demonstrations were held at the Intake on the Yukon River in Riverdale—Tatshenshini River Expediting presented a series of fast-water rescue techniques, Carcross SAR personnel demonstrated power boat manoeuvres, and the Toronto Fire Department put on a rope demonstration.

As always, social events were very popular with SARSCENE delegates, and this year the Whitehorse

organizers were lauded for their efforts. From the meet and greet socials to the banquet and closing night ceremonies, organizers injected Yukon hospitality and entertainment into every event. Delegates got into the fun with colourful Klondike costumes and the casino at Saturday night's Days of '98 Gold Rush Review. Without a doubt, the evening's highlight was the highly entertaining *SAR Sam Contest*, where eager contestants performed a series of hilarious tasks including wild game call, chainsaw toss, a (modified) striptease, and a fashion show!

Many thanks to the volunteers who put in countless hours to bring SARSCENE 2001 to the Yukon. WDSAR still has copies of the popular Chris Caldwell poster commissioned for SARSCENE (\$15) for sale, as well as pocket-sized emergency survival kits (\$3) designed by Monty Alford. Check the WDSAR website for details about these fundraising items.

SARSCENE 2002

Next year's SARSCENE will be held in Halifax from Sept 11 – 14, 2002 and hosted by Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association. An information package can be downloaded in .pdf format from the National Search & Rescue Secretariat web site: www.nss.gc.ca (under Events). See you there!



Funding for Training and Planning

As the seasons change and Yukon's emergency response teams look back on another busy summer, it's time to think about training and planning opportunities for this winter. In light of a heightened awareness of emergency preparedness and planning due to the events of September 11th, Yukon's emergency response community may experience a spike in interest and commitment from members and community leaders.

The Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) is a federal cost sharing arrangement with the provinces and territories to encourage emergency preparedness projects that support national objectives and priorities. Yukon Government departments, municipalities and First Nations are eligible to apply for JEPP funds to support emergency planning and training projects.



Eligible JEPP projects might include:

- Developing emergency plans
- Conducting emergency exercises
- Supporting training and education
- Purchasing telecommunications equipment
- Acquiring specialized equipment

In the Yukon, all JEPP applications and funding approvals are coordinated through Emergency Measures Branch on behalf of all applicants. Generally the federal contribution will not exceed 50% of the total project cost. In some cases the EMB may be in a position to contribute to the project to further offset the contribution required by the applicant.

To obtain JEPP guidelines or submit an application, contact Yukon EMB at (867) 667-5220.



Situation Reports

June 30 A paraglider crashed on top of the cliff above Midnight Dome Slide in Dawson. Six volunteers assisted RCMP in recovering the victim. The paraglider was bruised and in shock but generally okay.

July 2 Carmacks SAR responded to a search for an overdue canoeist. The canoeist was found unharmed on a road near the Yukon River.

July 16 Whitehorse Search and Rescue were tasked by the RCMP to look for two fishermen reported overdue northeast of Whitehorse. Two SAR members on all-terrain vehicles found the truck and were able to locate the subjects who had walked out.

July 17 Tourists on the McQuesten River came upon what they thought was an overturned inflatable canoe and life jacket. SAR members from MAYO investigated, but found no one in the area. The team recovered all material from the scene and handed it over to the RCMP.

July 19 The RCMP tasked Whitehorse SAR to assist in a search of the Yukon River near Whitehorse for a man who had reportedly entered the water. Searchers combed the river through the night and early the following morning. The flight crew of the

RCMP Twin Otter "MPL" found the drowning victim in the river downstream from the city.

Aug. 14 Whitehorse SAR and the RCMP participated in a search for a missing man believed to have mental health problems. He was located downtown and in good health.

Sept. 4 Carmacks SAR was tasked by the RCMP to assist in the search for a missing child. The child was located asleep in the Band Office.

Sept. 11 Two Korean Air 747s had to land at Whitehorse when U.S. airspace was closed as a result of terrorist attacks. Prior to arrival Whitehorse, there were indications that one of the aircraft was hijacked. Emergency Health and Social Services staff and volunteers provided support for three days to more than 200 foreign passengers.

Sept. 22 Carmacks SAR was tasked by RCMP to assist in the search and recovery of a stranded hunter. Two hunting partners were travelling by boat and became separated while one person was ashore. The other partner was unable to return to the site because the boat's motor was not working. He floated down the Yukon River to Dawson City where he contacted the RCMP for assistance.



And in other news...



New Fire Boat for Tagish Lake

In July, EMO was pleased to present a boat and three survival suits to Brian and Nancy Pope and Jake Heisler of the Tagish Lake Fire Department. This 16-foot aluminum hull craft with a 55 horsepower outboard will aid in transporting a portable fire pump and other fire equipment across Tagish Lake and to the 6-Mile subdivision. It will also enable them to move gear and people for fighting forest fires or carrying out rescues on the lake when needed.

New Face at EMO

In light of the recent increase in the public's awareness of emergency preparedness and response, EMB plans to take the opportunity to enhance its communications and public education activities. Starting in October, YTG communications officer Doug Caldwell will be joining EMO to work on several key initiatives. Among Doug's challenges will be to develop a coordinated multi-agency communications strategy for emergency response, and developing strategies for year-round public awareness. Doug will also be working on several other projects, ranging from media relations planning to refining internal communications procedures.

Back to School

Fall means back to school and that's exactly what Emergency Measures Branch Director Eric Magnuson is doing. On extended leave for the next seven months, Eric is attending the University of Victoria. He is scheduled to return to work in April 2002. During Eric's absence, Kevin Wallinger (Sept. 1 – Dec 15th) and Phil Wintemute (Dec. 15 – March 31, 2002) are filling in as Acting Director of EMB.

Website Address

Be sure to bookmark EMO's new website:
www.cts.gov.yk.ca/emo

Check back regularly for event updates and any other current information. Don't forget that back issues of MEMO can be downloaded from the site in .pdf format.

Yukon SAR Teams Recognized

Yukon's SAR teams were recognized for their outstanding volunteer contributions during the SARSCENE 2001 Opening Ceremonies. Yukon's Senator, Ione Christensen, presented International Year of the Volunteer certificates to representatives of search and rescue teams throughout the territory. Pictured at right is Gail Nardi, a dog handler with Whitehorse District SAR. Calvin Hoogland accepted on behalf of Mayo SAR, Peter Upton for Kluane SAR, Tom Matthews for Carmacks SAR, and Bruce Harder for Carcross SAR. ❄️



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