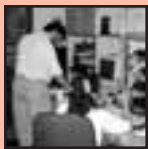




emo NewsLetter

FALL 2004

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The Long, Hot Summer of 2004

This summer was one of the hottest ever, with record-breaking Yukon temperatures beginning in early June and continuing well into August. Emergency situations caused by wildfires and floods meant that the EMO Joint Emergency Operations Coordination Centre (JEOCC) was activated for 22 consecutive days. From 06:00 to 22:00 hrs each day, EMO staff, Duty Officers, Emergency Coordination Group members and JEOCC personnel were planning, sharing information and expertise, and pooling resources and personnel to address the extreme fire behavior and floods that Mother Nature threw at Yukon and its residents.

For several weeks, staff of Protective Services held briefings and planning sessions on the upcoming territorial fire season. At 00:30 hrs on Thursday, June 24, the Director of the JEOCC received a phone call requesting attendance at a Wildland Fire Management briefing. Increasingly dangerous wildfire behaviour in the Swan Lake area between Teslin and Watson Lake meant that local residents needed to be advised of a potential evacuation for the following day. The JEOCC was immediately activated and the RCMP, Highways and Public Works, Emergency Social Services and EMO personnel were dispatched to the operations centre. Planning, notifications and communication activities took place throughout the night and into the early morning hours.

continued on p.4



Some of the members of the JEOCC team during a briefing, Summer 2004 - Photo courtesy YTG

YARA to the Rescue

Frontline search and rescue and emergency response personnel are usually at the centre of emergencies, but on August 29, the Yukon's amateur radio community held the spotlight.

One of two people riding ATVs in a remote area sustained significant chest injuries when his machine rolled. The companion happened to be an amateur radio operator, and he used his amateur radio to access the Yukon Amateur Radio Association repeater system. He contacted other ham radio operators who quickly contacted the Yukon Ambulance Service, relayed critical medical and location information and launched a rescue.

Due to the remote location of the victim, a regular ambulance could not be dispatched and a helicopter was arranged. Throughout the rescue, ham operators served as a bridge between the companion, medical personnel and the helicopter. The site

was so remote that the companion had to meet the helicopter at an alternate location and guide the pilot to the accident scene. After the victim was safely evacuated, ham radio operators continued to relay information to family members and help coordinate the evacuation of the companion and equipment. Only when evacuations were completed and plans were in place to get

family members to the hospital did the local ham group 'stand down'.

Amateur in ham radio terms only means that the men and women who work with radios as a hobby are unpaid. Their skills and professionalism as radio operators are invaluable to the community, as demonstrated in their handling of emergencies like this one. In the

Yukon, there is a long and close association between the Yukon's Emergency Measures Organization and the Yukon Amateur Radio Association. Members participate in specialized training and exercises, share best practices and maintain regular contact to ensure that - when needed - amateur radio can contribute to the best outcome in emergency situations.



YARA members working in the JEOCC communications centre - Photo courtesy YTG

NSS Funding Available

Do you or your organization have great ideas to improve search and rescue? Do you need resources to further your search and rescue capabilities or finance your projects?

The new Search and Rescue Initiatives Fund is dedicated to improving search and rescue in Canada. Managed by the National Search and Rescue Secretariat (NSS), the fund is accessible to governments, private sector, industry, academia and the volunteer community.

Yukon project submissions must be sponsored by Yukon's

Emergency Measures Organization. The fund supports projects that address at least one or more of six established categories.

Proposals are reviewed, put in priority order and approved based on funding availability.

For complete details about the New Search and Rescue (SAR) Initiatives Fund (NIF) Program Guide, contact Yukon EMO or call 1-800-727-9414 to request a Program Guide.



New Wheels



Photo of vehicle donated to YARA by Industry Canada: Penny Stratus, Erin Deacon and Jeff Stanhope - Photo courtesy YTG

Though heat, fires and floods top EMO news for 2004, it seems that this was also the year of the truck.

Several Yukon emergency organizations received vehicles to support emergency response activities.

In April, Industry Canada gave Yukon EMO a newer vehicle to be deployed to the Yukon Amateur Radio Association (YARA). In turn, YARA transferred their communications vehicle to the Yukon Fire Marshal's office for redeployment as an emergency response vehicle in Ross River.

Thanks to Industry Canada for its contribution.

In conjunction with Protective Services, the community of Watson Lake Fire Department also acquired a new emergency response vehicle for the Watson Lake Fire Department.

Last spring, Protective Services and Wildland Fire Management (WFM) acquired several initial

attack fire vehicles.

Tasked with early suppression of wildfires, teams of four can respond in these specialized vehicles in the critical, early stages of



New Emergency Response Vehicle - EMO command post in Watson Lake. Photo courtesy Dan Miller


wildfires. The new fleet includes ground water tankers and fire trucks equipped for initial fire suppression.

WFM began training volunteer fire departments for



YARA vehicle to be redeployed to Ross River: John Holesworth and Erin Deacon - Photo courtesy YTG

wildfire situations by teaching the Incident Command System, the international standard for wildfire management used throughout North America. They also held an integrated spring training exercise in Tagish

Wildland fire response time to the Southern Lakes area may take up to an hour for Whitehorse and Teslin-based initial attack crews. To improve this response time, the Yukon Government asked volunteer fire fighters in Tagish, Marsh Lake, Carcross, Golden Horn and Mount Lorne to stand by at their stations during extreme hazard alerts in order to improve the critical response time. This year, the Honourable Minister Hart also announced an increase in the honoraria for volunteer fire chiefs from \$100 per month to \$200 per month, and increased honoraria for volunteer fire fighters from \$10 and \$15 per hour to \$20 per hour. 

with crews, aircraft, partners and volunteer fire departments.



Photo courtesy YTG

The Long Hot Summer of 2004

continued from p.1...

For the next nine days, Yukon and B.C. Emergency Measures Organizations worked with Yukon Wildland Fire Management, B.C. Ministry of Forests, Highways, RCMP, Emergency Social Services, other government agencies, the media, community of Watson Lake, telecommunications volunteers, residents and private industry personnel to manage the critical situation. The wildfire threatened the closure of the Yukon's main artery, the Alaska Highway, and threatened properties of 30 residents of Swift River.

The Swan Lake fire was at the whim and will of Mother Nature. It danced across the highway several times. Winds pushed the fire to the west, turned it back on itself and raced east, created heavy smoke and poor visibility, and forced highway delays and closures. The flanks of the fire also threatened a portion of the Yukon's communication infrastructure, creating another problem monitored by the JEOCC.

And it didn't stop there...

The weather remained hot, and the extreme conditions were accompanied by a record number of lightning strikes across the territory. Fires became active everywhere. The hot weather was also the catalyst for flooding that would be experienced later in the summer. Melting snow caps and glaciers from surrounding mountains caused water levels to rise in Marsh and Tagish Lakes and Carcross area lakes and their tributaries, surpassing 1992 record water levels.

As new fires became a daily occurrence, the JEOCC was involved in many aspects of coordination, communications and deployment of personnel, resources and information.

Later in the summer, efforts were focused on coordinated responses to rising floodwaters in the Southern Lakes area. Through all of these events, shared information and resources were the key factors in addressing these issues successfully.

Government personnel not routinely associated with EMO assisted with phones and ran errands.

The City of Whitehorse and Emergency Health and Social Services assisted Yukon EMO by making personnel available to travel to Dawson to help with emergency planning.

The Yukon Amateur Radio Association sent volunteers to Swan Lake to assist with emergency communication links in Southeast Yukon. They were also on standby to assist with telecoms for Dawson area fires.

Search and Rescue members as well as many of the volunteer fire departments assisted with posting fire ban posters.

Families of emergency response personnel showed their support and understanding of leave cancellations and early morning, late night and weekend work assignments.

Emergency Measures Coordinators in Yukon communities became the eyes and ears for the JEOCC, offering support and resources as events threatened neighbouring communities.



Photo courtesy Fritz Mueller

- The Fire Marshal's Office and members of the volunteer fire departments in Marsh Lake, Tagish and McClintock regularly advised EMO about water levels and flood issues during the Southern Lakes flood watch.
- Volunteer fire departments worked side-by-side with Wildland Fire Management personnel to combat fires threatening their communities.
- Community Services Minister Glenn Hart and deputy ministers from across government were involved in and aware of situations faced by their departments and offered their full support.
- Neighbouring provinces and territories offered assistance.
- Private, territorial and federal government partners formed a cohesive emergency coordination planning group within which EMO and the JEOCC were proud to be active participants.

Thanks to everyone's dedication and support, these crises were met with coordinated, effective and efficient responses.

At the Emergency Management Conference in May, we discussed the concept of 'Sharing Risk'. The conference's theme foreshadowed what was to come and was the perfect lead-in for this summer's activities. Together, we put this theme into action and worked to collectively and effectively manage, mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from a variety of emergency situations.

It is with heart-felt appreciation and gratitude that I would like to thank everyone involved in this summer's events, including the JEOCC staff, community EMO Coordinators, Protective Services staff, media, inter-governmental staff, volunteers, families and emergency management partners. You made a difference. I look forward to our continued partnerships and to advancing and strengthening emergency management in Yukon.



Sincerely,
Erin Deacon
JEOCC Director and EMO Manager



Photo courtesy YTC

FIRES & FLOODS

emo

Looking back at the summer 2004



Photo courtesy YTG



Photo courtesy YTG



Photo courtesy YTG



Photo courtesy YTG



Photo courtesy YTG



Photo courtesy YTG



Photo courtesy YTG



Photo courtesy Fritz Mueller



Photo courtesy Fritz Mueller



Photo courtesy Fritz Mueller



Photo courtesy YTG



Photo courtesy Fritz Mueller

22 days in the life of Yukon EMO

June 24

Faro activates its Emergency Operations Centre due to the Blind Creek fire 10 km east of Faro.

June 26

A Dawson family was evacuated from a mining claim.

June 27

A fire comes to within 18 km of Dawson. An evacuation alert was issued to Lower Post in Southeast Yukon.

June 28

An evacuation order was issued to residents of Contact Creek and Iron Creek lodges on the Alaska Highway, south of Watson Lake. The Coal Lake fire raced across the landscape, closing the highway intermittently over the next seven days. Residents stayed in Watson Lake until they were able to return home July 6. Heavy lightning strikes south of Whitehorse had volunteer firefighters chasing down 'smokes' through the night to ensure their communities were safe.

June 29

Mayo Fire #9 marched to within 30 km of Pelly and 10 km from a Yukon communications tower. Evacuation plans for Pelly were confirmed. That evening, EMO watched more Dawson area fires threaten yet another communications tower.

July 1

B.C.'s Provincial Emergency Program advised EMO and the JEOCC that Lower Post was under further threat and requested mutual aid from Yukon to potentially receive these residents and assist with evacuation plans.

July 3

The JEOCC turned its focus north as fire threatened the lodge, guests and residents of Wellesley Lake near Beaver Creek. Old Crow reported to EMO that heavy smoke was causing health problems. Later that night, Dawson fires increased in intensity and a State of Emergency was declared for the southern goldfields area.

July 6

A fire in Mendenhall subdivision threatened people, homes and also another communications tower. A fire on the Campbell Highway encroached on a highways maintenance camp. Meanwhile, the JEOCC was notified that due

to extreme summer temperatures, glacier melt would increase water levels in the Southern Lakes to near record 1992 levels over the coming weeks.

Thankfully, the end to the hottest summer on record finally did come...

July 22

B.C. fires threatening southeastern Yukon communities were finally all declared under control.

July 27

The Yukon fire ban was lifted entirely.

July 28

Dawson area evacuation alerts were cancelled.

August 6

The State of Emergency was terminated for the southern goldfields.

Sept. 14

The weekly flood watch and visits to the Southern Lakes were gradually demobilized.



Photo courtesy Fritz Mueller

Meet your Yukon EMO Duty Officers

The Yukon EMO Duty Officer program uses government volunteers to provide 24/7 contacts for EMO outside normal office hours. The Duty Officer is responsible for notifying appropriate authorities according to the scale of an emergency, and to assist in the Yukon Government's Joint Emergency Operations Coordination Centre as required.



Back row L to R: Bruce Willis, Dwayne Wheeler, Erin Deacon. Front row L to R: Gail Thiessen, Sheila Baker, Linda Lemphers-Fenton. Photo courtesy YTC



L to R: Jack Holesworth, Lori Larose, Tonny Jansen. Missing from photos: Doug Caldwell, Phil Wintemute and Jack Schneider. Photo courtesy YTC

Officers are 'on duty' for two consecutive weeks approximately four times per year. To keep their emergency management skills current, Duty Officers are required to participate in meetings and territorial, municipal and internal exercises, and attend emergency management conferences. Duty Officers are also encouraged to participate in EMO emergency management courses and enroll at the Canadian Emergency Preparedness College in Ottawa, Ontario.



EMO Taskings

Jan. 06 Rescue	Klondike SAR Assn. 60 mile frostbite person	successful
Jan. 16 Rescue	Kluane EMO/SAR Missing hunter	successful
Jan. 31 Search	Carcross Area Rescue Team Assoc. Fraser/Log Cabin lost skier	successful
Feb. 23 Search	Kluane EMO/SAR 5 lost snowmobilers	successful
Mar. 23 Rescue	EMO mutual aid w/ BCPEP Personal Locator Beacon	successful
Apr. 13 Site maintenance	YARA Haines Junction	complete
May 02 Operations	EMO Dawson Flooding at Flat Creek	complete
May 02 Search	Klondike SAR Assn. Yukon River -4 missing people	successful
May 04 Rescue	Carcross Area Rescue Team Assoc. 1 snowmobiler	successful
May 14 Search	Carmacks Area SAR Volunteers Assoc. Potential overturned canoe	successful
May 19 Operations	Old Crow Flooding of Porcupine River	complete
May 28 Site maintenance	YARA Hayes Peak	complete

June 04 Search	Whitehorse District SAR Lost child	successful
June 17 Search	Whitehorse District SAR Missing vehicle	successful
June 22 Install VHF repeater	YARA Skagway	complete
June 24 - July 15 Operational	EMO Fires at Swift, Contact, Iron, Pelly, Faro and Dawson	complete
June 24 Deployment	YARA Swift River	successful
July 06 - Sept. 09 Operational	EMO Southern Lakes flooding	complete
July 15 Site maintenance	YARA Montana	complete
Aug. 05 Search	Teslin SAR 3 overdue adults	successful
Aug. 16 Site maintenance	YARA Montana	complete
Aug. 27 Site maintenance	YARA Decoeli	complete
Sept. 03 Search	Klondike SAR Assn. Overdue jogger	successful
Sept. 10 Search	Kluane EMO/SAR Climber	successful

Training Round-Up

In April, the Department of Highways hosted a joint avalanche course at Fraser in White Pass with Parks Canada, Canada Customs, an avalanche dog and handler, EMO, Carcross Area Rescue Team Association (CARTA) and the RCMP. About 25 people partici-

and afternoon snowmobiling in White Pass followed by a second day of avalanche awareness training. New SAR members participated, as well as members of the public who were interested in learning about snow conditions and avalanche hazards. Warm



Photo courtesy YTC

pated in the one-day exercise. A meeting was held to discuss roles and responsibilities and update contact information. The exercise involved one live burial and two dummy searches. Personnel exercised command post and site commander positions, probe lines and search patterns, communications and beacon use.

A week later, CARTA organized a public outing

weather offered numerous examples of slides in the mountains surrounding Fraser Lake. Sunny, pleasant conditions also meant that the area was busy with recreational snowmobilers, many of whom continued to high-mark on dangerous slopes. For ideas or guidance organizing a public awareness exercise with your SAR group, contact Yukon EMO.

In mid-May, Whitehorse District Search and Rescue (WDSAR) and Yukon Emergency Measures Organization hosted a spring SAR training weekend in Whitehorse. The training focused on boats, boat safety, maintenance and operation, and water search and rescue. The sunny weekend featured water recovery exercises at Schwatka Lake, radio protocols, mapping and a water training session at the Lions Pool. Participants received new boat equipment and several communities were outfitted with marine radios. SAR members also took an exam to receive a Pleasure Craft Operating Card, a 2007 Coast Guard requirement. The weekend concluded with a water search in Miles Canyon and

Schwatka Lake. Thanks to teams from Faro, Carmacks, Whitehorse, Haines Junction, Carcross and Teslin for participating. Special thanks to Al Ekholm, Graham MacCannell, Brent Eby, Chris Locke, Ron Adams, the City of Whitehorse, life guards at Whitehorse Aquatic Centre and Yukon Wildland Fire Management for their support of this weekend. We would also like to thank John and Linda Lemphers-Fenton who played our victims and who successfully got themselves lost on our behalf, and Alan Deacon who was drowned several times in order to be pulled into the boats.



Photo courtesy YTC

EMO Hosts Conference

In late May, EMO hosted "Sharing Risk", Yukon's Emergency Management Conference.

Speakers included Dr. Bryce Lark (West Nile), Paul Crober (Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness - Gov't of Canada), Jeff Stanhope (Yukon Marine Distress Radio System), Erin Deacon (EMO Highlights), Dan Boyd & Ken Colburt (Protective Services Update & Report Recommendations), Scott Hamilton (Incident Command System) and a feature presentation by Bob

Bugslag, Director of the B.C. Provincial Emergency Program. Mr. Bugslag provided a review of B.C.'s 2003 fire season. Given the summer faced by the Yukon, this presentation was timely and very useful for emergency response planners preparing for Yukon's 2004 fire season.

For more information on these or other training programs contact EMO at (867) 667-5220.



2004 Training Summary

Feb. 3

Carcross Area Rescue Team
- Joint Avalanche Training
with Highways

Feb. 14

Kluane EMO/SAR Society
- Avalanche Awareness

Mar. 04

Whitehorse District SAR -
Mock Search

Mar. 10

Carcross Area Rescue Team
- Mock Exercise

Mar. 25

Carcross Area Rescue Team
- Parks Avalanche Exercise

Apr. 23

Champagne/Aishihik First
Nations - Elected Official
Course

Apr. 28

Faro SAR - Refresher
Training

Apr. 29

Whitehorse District SAR -
Lion's Trade Show

May 06

Carmacks Area SAR -
Ridge Run Support

May 06

Whitehorse District SAR -
Community Garbage
Pick-up

May 07

Faro SAR - Hug-A-Tree
Program

May 13

EMO - Exercise Crowded Sky

May 14-16

SAR Spring Training -
"Water, Water Everywhere"

June 7

Whitehorse District SAR -
Tracking Course

June 8

Yukon Amateur Radio

Assn. - Communications for
Bike Relay

June 19

Carcross Area Rescue Team
- Joint Air/Ground
Search with CASARA

June 22-27

Whitehorse District, Faro,
Carmacks and Klondike
SAR Groups - Yukon River
Quest Support

July 15

Faro SAR - Pool & Lake
Training

Sept. 10

Yukon Amateur Radio
Assn. - Communications
for Klondike Road Relay



Tianna Collon proves it's never too soon to learn avalanche safety - Photo courtesy Bruce Harder, CARTA

Upcoming Training...



Photo courtesy YTC

EMO now lists current training opportunities on the EMO website. Upcoming training includes a GPS course (Oct. 16 - 17), Emergency Telecommunications Training (Nov. 18) and MDMRS Telecommunications (Nov. 19). Also watch for the 2004/2005 Training Calendar to be released soon.

Go to www.gov.yk.ca/depts/communi-ty/emo and select the Training link.

For more information about courses and training opportunities, please contact the EMO Planning and Training Coordinator Ron Adams at (867) 667-5220.

The 13th annual search and rescue workshop will be held in Calgary,

Alberta from October 13 - 16, 2004. This year's SARSCENE workshop will feature four days of presentations, demonstrations, a trade show, SAR Games, training sessions and an awards banquet. SARSCENE offers a unique opportunity for SAR personnel to share their expertise and ideas with over 600 participants from air, land and marine organizations from across Canada. EMO will be supporting two Yukon SAR members to attend SARSCENE 2004 in Calgary.

For more information about SARSCENE contact Yukon EMO, visit the website at www.nss.gc.ca or call 1-800-727-9414.



Goodbyes & Welcomes...

Faro SAR members Kerry Rees and Melanie Pratch have left the Yukon. This dynamic duo was very active in the territory's SAR community. We're sad to see them go, but we wish Kerry and Melanie good luck in Alberta and thank them for their contributions.

Welcome to Larry Baran, the new Chief Administrative Officer for the community of Faro. Larry is also serving as Faro's EMO coordinator.

Changes to Your Newsletter

You may notice some changes in this issue of your newsletter. Since it's no longer a quarterly, we renamed the publication to reflect this change. To accommodate all of your news and photographs, we added four more pages. EMO Newsletter is now a 12-page newsletter sent twice a year to members of the Yukon emergency response community.

We welcome your submissions and stories.

Contact EMO at
(867) 667-5220 or
fax us at (867) 393-6266.

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 from EMO:

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Community Services, Government of Yukon
Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, Y1A 2C6
Tel: (867) 667-5220 Fax: (867) 393-6266
Email: emo.yukon@gov.yk.ca
Website: www.gov.yk.ca/depts/community/emo

Avalanche Tips

As winter approaches and emergency personnel prepare for traveling in winter conditions, it's a good time to review what to do if an avalanche hits your vehicle. Preparation is everything. Make sure vehicles are properly equipped with necessary emergency and communications equipment. Most importantly, ensure that avalanche probes, transceivers and warm clothing are accessible from inside the vehicle.

If you are caught in an avalanche while in a vehicle:

1. Remain calm.
2. Remain in the vehicle.
3. Do not smoke.
4. Shut off the engine and lights.
5. Leave flashers and radio on.
6. Report the accident if possible.
7. Ensure rescue transceiver is in transmit mode.
8. Do not start the engine.
9. Push a probe rod slowly up to identify your location.
10. Await rescue personnel.



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Yukon
Community Services