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EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES LEARN FROM EARTHQUAKE EXPERT

WHITEHORSE – This weekend’s first Emergency Medical Services educational symposium will feature guest speaker Larry Masterman, the paramedic captain who was on duty for San Francisco’s 1989 earthquake.

Health and Social Services Minister Peter Jenkins said this presents a wonderful opportunity for the Yukon’s own emergency medical services responders to learn from someone who has been in the thick of things.

“We are indeed fortunate that Mr. Masterman will be able to share his experiences with us. While we can host table top and mock events, until we actually live through something like the 1989 earthquake or the recent flooding in New Orleans, no one can be totally prepared for these events. However, having people talk about real life incidents really helps,” said Jenkins.

Masterman will talk about recruitment and retention of paramedics and provide a report on EMS services in Israel. Four other workshops will take place over the weekend.

Michael Swainson, acting manager of EMS said all attendants will benefit from the educational symposium. “All of this information increases our skill set,” he said. “We want to have the best trained responders that we can possibly have.”

Swainson added that Yukon is quite highly thought of in the areas of emergency response and was invited to send participants and an assessor to two events in Juneau, Alaska this past year. The first was a table top mass casualty exercise that included a school bus crash, a helicopter crash, and a hazardous waste spill into sensitive salmon habitats around Juneau. The second included an earthquake combined with an anthrax scare.

“We have a joint agreement with Alaska to provide support services to each other in the event of a catastrophe. Working together on training is another positive,” Swainson said.

As part of the weekend’s events, EMS will host its 7th annual EMS Skills Competition at the High Country Inn on Saturday.

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