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**YUKON TO MODERNIZE EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEM WHILE ENSURING UNINTERRUPTED AMBULANCE SERVICES**

WHITEHORSE – Premier Dennis Fentie and Health and Social Services Minister Brad Cathers announced today that the Yukon government will modernize its entire emergency services system to provide the best possible coordinated response for ambulance, fire and other emergencies within the territory.

"The time has come to upgrade the Yukon government's emergency services to provide a well-coordinated first response to emergencies in our communities," Fentie said. "Given concerns brought forward by our Emergency Medical Services volunteers, recent record forest fire seasons, and this year's flooding crisis, we will enhance our emergency response system to make the most efficient use of all our resources, including the best use of our volunteers."

The Yukon government will create a modernized, coordinated emergency first response system that utilizes and harmonizes resources available within government departments and in communities across the territory. This will improve and augment firefighting and ambulance response services presently delivered by volunteers, and also ensure better coordination for other emergencies, such as wildfires and flooding.

"We appreciate the commitment and dedication of the volunteers delivering ambulance services to rural communities and will continue to work with them to resolve their issues," Cathers said. "At the same time, the Government of Yukon has the overall responsibility to provide for public health and safety, and I want to assure Yukoners that ambulance services will not be disrupted as we continue our discussions with EMS volunteers."

In order to develop an emergency response system that best coordinates the various services provided by volunteers and governments, the Yukon government will shortly begin consulting with First Nations, municipalities, ambulance and firefighting volunteers, and other stakeholders. The government will also canvass communities to increase the available complement of volunteers.

"Over the years, Yukon's volunteers have done an excellent job in providing emergency services on behalf of the Yukon public," Fentie said. "It is time to take a more integrated approach that reduces the burden on them."

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