

ESS News

COMOX VALLEY

A newsletter for Emergency Social Services volunteers



Summer 2010

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It could happen here!

We all remember the Kelowna Fires of 2003 when an interface fire burned into or right through Kelowna neighborhoods. Over 30,000 people were evacuated and 238 homes were destroyed.

There is potential for a similar event on the East Coast of Vancouver Island. Here too are many areas where rural homes are interspersed throughout the forest.

Our forests of second-growth, mostly Douglas-fir are commonly dense with an abundance of fine fuels, certainly sufficient to carry a rapidly moving forest fire. The two remaining risk factors – a prolonged dry summer and an ignition source are matters of chance. But we can all remember several great summers in the last decade with little or no rain for many weeks, and those pleasant, cooling northwesterly winds.

The Comox Valley Emergency Program has specific plans to deal with interface fires, including coordination of efforts by the many jurisdictions and agencies that would be involved in response. A group of up to 50 meet monthly to ensure that emergency plans and preparations are up-to-date.

Comox Valley Emergency Social Services is prepared and ready to open reception centers for evacuees, where basic needs for food, lodging and other necessities would be provided. Such assistance is funded by EMBC (Emergency Management BC).

Ways to increase the fire resistance of your home and property

If you are a homeowner living in close proximity to the forest (on the 'interface' of forest and settlement), there are ways to increase the fire resistance of your home and property. Surround your home with a 10-metre zone within which fuels are minimized. In this zone, most of the trees, shrubs and brush should be removed. Remove branches that overhang the roof or touch the side of the building. Plants that remain in this zone should be leafy deciduous plants rather than needle-leaved trees and cedars. An irrigated lawn will not carry a fire. ▼



*Kelowna 2003
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EMERGENCY SOCIAL SERVICES

Emergency Social Services (ESS) is an emergency response program made up of dedicated individuals who share a common goal of assisting people in an emergency.

Working under the umbrella of the Comox Valley Emergency Program, the ESS mandate is to provide essential services to maintain life and health for people forced to evacuate their homes temporarily or if their homes are damaged or destroyed. When disaster strikes, ESS establishes a reception centre – a safe place – where people can gather to get information, register, and receive assistance with their basic needs of food, lodging, clothing and family reunification, usually for the first 72 hours of a disaster. ■



Kelowna fires 2003 – the aftermath

Around this zone, remove dead trees, and thin trees out to leave gaps between the crowns. Clear smaller trees and brush growing under taller trees and remove branches from the lower 2-3 metres. The resulting lack of fine fuel continuity helps prevent a ground fire from developing into a crown fire. Cedar hedges with lots of accumulated dry litter in the inside of the shrubs are a great way to carry a fire to a building, or from building to building.

Undertake a cleanup regularly. Remove woody debris and needles that can carry a fire across the ground surface. ►

Remove needles and other forest litter from roofs and eaves-troughs. Clean up accumulated combustible debris from below slotted deck surfaces. Keep firewood piles at least 10 metres from the house.

If you are building a new home or renovating in an interface area; use fire-resistant building materials, especially on the roof. Untreated cedar shake roofs are the number one cause of house losses to wildland fires. Eaves and vents provide openings into the house structure that can allow the entry of embers and heat. Ensure eaves are closed in, and screen all vents and soffits. The underside of decks should be sheathed with fire-resistant materials.

For the worst case scenario, do you have an emergency plan? Does your family know the escape routes? Do you know who and what numbers to call and what to do? Do you have an emergency contact number to call outside of the area?

For more information contact your local fire department and/or the BC Forest Service Campbell River office.

The Homeowner's Firesmart Manual is available online at

<http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/firecom/pdf/homeowner-firesmart.pdf>

Copies of the Firesmart Manual are also available at the ESS office. The Ministry of Forestry has a facebook page at

<http://www.facebook.com/BCForestFireInfo>

2009 Gold River Fire

*An excerpt from Courier-Islander
July 2009 (long weekend)*

The Antler Lake fire threatened to cut off Gold River, with about 1,400 residents, and power to the North Island.

The fire started last Wednesday after a lightning strike. It was last reported at nine hectares in size. *(it grew much larger before it was put out)* Mayor Craig Anderson said it looked like the fire was knocked down Saturday afternoon, but it flared up again that night.

It was burning about two kilometres east of Gold River and is within 800 metres of Highway 28, which connects Gold River to Campbell River,



90 kilometres to the east, Anderson said. BC Hydro is on scene because the fire was 600 metres away from the main power line that services Gold River and the north part of the Island.

Steep slopes are hampering efforts to fight the blaze. Crews are working on the lower portion of the fire in areas they can reach on foot, while helicopters dump water on hot spots.

“The town is not in danger at this point,” Anderson said, adding some locals became fearful over the weekend

after the fire department warned residents in a subdivision closest to the fire they should be packed and ready in case an alert is issued. Although evacuations appear unlikely, Anderson said, Gold River has set up an emergency operations command centre in the village's council chambers.

In an average fire season, which runs from April to October, there are 1,200 fires by the first week of August, according to statistics from the past seven years. This year 2009, there have already been 2,200 fires. ■

ESS Director's Report

Emergency Preparedness Week

Emergency Preparedness Week (EP Week) began 15 years ago as a way to raise awareness across the country about the importance of being prepared for an emergency.

This year EP Week was celebrated May 2 – 8. Gale Wheeler, Rob Neal, Kathy Swetnam and Alice Setter-Goss gave presentations to grade 5 students in six Comox Valley elementary schools. Comox Valley ESS displays were organized by Alice Setter-Goss at the Driftwood Mall.

Thanks to all volunteers who participated in our 2010 National Emergency Preparedness Week activities.

The winners of the EP Week 'Mall' draw are:

1st prize Marc.....Ready Tube donated by St John Ambulance

2nd prize ... Chase...Duffle bag donated by Canadian Tire

\$25 gift card from Walmart to help start a preparedness kit

3rd prize.... AnnPet Care Grab 'n' Go bag

Retiring members

On behalf of CVESS I would like to recognize the many hours donated to Comox Valley ESS by the following retiring members: **Mary & Chris Carter, Diane Paquin, Al Scott, Lawrence Jean, Sandra Perka and Trudy Ash.** Thank you all for your support over the past years.

New volunteers

Six new volunteers (Susan Anderson, Rachele Chinnery, James Howard, Joyce Jeffries, Judy Murphy, Sylvia Stevensen) attended the Introduction to ESS course held on May 18. We appreciate their interest and commitment.

New acronym

PEP has changed it's name --- now EMBC (Emergency Management BC)

■ *Marg Carr, Comox Valley ESSD*



2010 Driftwood Mall displays – inside and out.
Patsy & Kathy (above) and Donna & Holly (below)



2010 Driftwood Mall Draw Winners with Marg
1st prize–Marc (above) and (3rd prize–Ann (below)



THANK YOU to the following businesses.

Your support of Emergency Preparedness Week activities is greatly appreciated

Canadian Tire | Diane Foster | Plates | St. John Ambulance | Walmart | Woofeys

Mobile Support Team

Volunteers from around the province were called to assist during 2003 and 2009 Interior Fire events. We had a half dozen volunteers from Comox Valley attend in 2003. They gained a wealth of experience and the opportunity to see how our ESS program works in a large scale event – not to mention the satisfaction of putting their training to use to help others. However, these volunteers went to assist NOT as ESS volunteers – but because they were also volunteers with Salvation Army and Red Cross and attended in that capacity. We have had a number of volunteers express interest in assisting during these large events – how can you do this?

Join the Mobile Support Team. This team can be activated/sent to areas around the province when a local group is overwhelmed by the size of their event. Team members are expected to be cross-trained in a number of areas – and committed ESS volunteers.

For more information regarding the qualifications and commitment level required, please contact the ESS Office c vess@shawcable.com

Number of people assisted due to BC Forest Fires

2009	25,024
2008	8
2007	8
2006	3,699
2005	567
2004	147
2003	37,299

Statistics per ESS webpage
Facts & Figures

TRAINING

Upcoming scheduled courses

Registration & Referrals course – Nanaimo – Saturday, June 12

Contact us ASAP c vess@shawcable.com and we will see if there is still space in the class

Introduction to ESS will be scheduled in June for new volunteers

Training courses available

This is a complete listing of courses available. If you are interested in any of the following please contact the ESS office c vess@shawcable.com to be placed on a waitlist.

- ESS 100 Introduction to ESS - *mandatory for all volunteers*
- ESS 111 Reception Centre - *mandatory for all volunteers*
- ESS 113 Registration & Referrals - *mandatory for all volunteers*
 - ESS in a BCERMS Environment Presentation - available 'online'
 - Referral Unit Presentation (review of referral form) - available 'online'
 - Personal Preparedness Workshop
- ESS 107 Level One Responder - available 'online'
- ESS 112 Group Lodging
- ESS 123 Documentation
- ESS 124 Resource Acquisition
- ESS 125 Manage Walk-In Volunteers
- Red Cross Inquiry, Search & Reply
- Red Cross Family Reunification (must have Inquiry, S&R course first)
- Salvation Army Meet & Greet
- Salvation Army Emotional Support (must have Meet & Greet course first)
- St. John First Aid
- Food Safe

Management Level Courses

- ESS 121 Leadership
- ESS 122 Manage Volunteer Programs
- ESS 171 Site Management
- ESS 181 ESS Director
- EOC 100
- EOC 200
- EOC 300



New volunteer James Howard attended the Introduction to ESS course in May

Recruiting volunteers

If you know of anyone who would be interested in learning more about ESS please give their names and numbers to Kathy Swetnam (250)335-2358 or email kswetnam3@shaw.ca

Emergency Preparedness for Camping

Camping season has started. Outdoor living is usually very exciting and much fun. There are endless possibilities for families and friends to do outdoors. And that is why many people prefer this type of relaxation and recreation.

At the same time it is important to realize that many people lose their lives or get seriously injured while camping outside. Many of these losses could be prevented with proper camping safety preparedness. Tent fires, insect bites, sunstroke and many other threats and dangers could be eliminated with proper preparation – make preparations ahead of time..

Check weather forecast before you leave to make sure that there will be no storms and other severe weather conditions in the area you are planning to visit. If some of those are expected, it is recommended to reschedule your camp out.

Create an emergency plan while you are still at home. Try to think what should be done if someone gets lost. This is very important if there will be young children in your group.

Familiarize yourself with the rules and regulations of the campsite you are going to be staying at.

Keep your clothes and sleeping bag safe and dry under any weather conditions. Wet clothes may lead to illnesses which is definitely something you want to avoid.

Have a 72 hour emergency kit with you. It should be portable and lightweight. Some items to include are high calorie foods, drinking water, matches, medications and a first aid kit, maps, flashlights, a knife, insect protection and additional clothes.

Enjoy your next trip! ■

EVENT

June program night



Fun with Forms

Tuesday, June 15 | 1900-2100 hrs | ESS/SAR Meeting Room

We hope not to have a call out this summer, but since we never know and fire danger is ever present, we've scheduled a skills refresher for Registration and Referral forms and BCERMS organization. We've tried to make it fun by organizing the material into "games" with "prizes."

Do you remember what the following colours mean?

Green; Red; Blue; Orange; Yellow; Grey – answers below

Come out and join in the fun!

Green: Manager; **Red:** Safety, Information, Liaison; **Blue:** Planning; **Orange:** Operations; **Yellow:** Logistics; **Grey:** Finance

About ESS News

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Have a wonderful summer!