



# COMOX VALLEY ESS NEWSLETTER

April 2010



## LESSONS LEARNED

We recently talked about lessons learned at a Moray session – lessons from the November exercise and from the flood responses in November and January.

So – **what did we learn ?**

1. We need pre-planned layouts for RC's, BUT these are not cast in stone; we need to be flexible to suit the situation at hand.
2. If possible, we need to find/use a space for evacuees to wait that is separate from the RC workers' area. Try to use/set up chairs an adjacent waiting area (e.g. foyer), or take advantage of room dividers. In theory, you don't open until you are 'ready' – in reality, the evacuees may well be there before the workers!
3. We improved kit organization, including better labeling and contents lists. The sign-in sheet is right on top of box #1. Since two boxes were too heavy, we have split the Moray kit (basic kit) into 5 boxes. The individual who brings the kit to RC is decided at the time of call-out. If the extended kit is needed, this requires a pick-up, an SUV or 2 cars.
4. We need to contact support organizations (Red Cross, St. John Ambulance, Salvation Army ...) sooner. We have now written memorandums of understanding with these organizations re call-out protocols – who does the ESS Director call, when, and what is expected.
5. **Who's in charge?** Remember, the first (or one of the first) on scene takes charge (puts on the green vest) – they hand over to a more experienced volunteer when they arrive, after giving them a situation up-date.
6. We need to organize our volunteers/workers FAST. Remember, the initial organization can change and will change. We need to be flexible to suit the situation. We found (for responses involving 30-40 family units) that loading up R&R workers (we had 12 at one RC – that's out of 17!) worked the best. This means that the remaining 5 covered off multiple functions and some got little or no attention (in this case, Search and Reply, since there were no deaths or injuries and there were no inquiries. Most documentation tasks were handled after evacuees were all taken care of).
7. We need to clearly identify the Registration/Referrals Supervisors – make them more visible. We will use orange ball caps for this (both R&R workers and supervisors will continue to wear orange vests. Other supervisors (Documentation, R.A. etc.) work in smaller groups and identification is not an issue. That said, you should always know who your supervisor is (if you don't, ask!).
8. Forms need to be checked by an R&R Supervisor BEFORE the forms are separated, BEFORE the evacuee leaves. This is critical early in a response when volunteers are 'rusty' (haven't done a form for awhile).
9. We need and now have a large, laminated version of the Operational Period crib sheet that clearly shows the start date/time and end date/time, how many (and when) meals and nights accommodation are being made available (and the task #). This can/will be posted for all R&R workers to see.
10. We learned that once up and running, we can look after (and fill out forms) for an evacuee in 15-20 minutes. As/when volunteers are available, 2 can work on forms with one evacuee/family.
11. Supplier agreements should be kept current and the supplier list must be up-to-date.
12. R&R workers stay with the evacuee – use the colored flags to get an Resource Acquisition worker or a runner to go to RA.
13. We need to train up a small group to look after RA within a RC, in particular how to compile/allocate/track the inventory of available motel rooms. Several volunteers have since taken the RA course.
14. Documentation now has a laptop computer with a flexible spreadsheet program to compile statistics needed for situation reports to the EOC (ultimately to PEP).
15. We need to improve communications – WITHIN the RC, BETWEEN RC & EOC, and between multiple RC's (if we have 2, as in November at one point). This involves both equipment (telephones, telephone lines, radios) as well as procedures (briefings, notice board).
16. Transportation needs can be reduced by better planning. Transportation of evacuees can/should be minimized by appropriate choice of RC location, motel and restaurant, and store locations. Comox has inherent limitations (restaurant distant from motel).
17. We will only provide referrals to Comox Taxi for specific trips. A recently acquired SAR van might be available to us and we can ask EOC for rental or bus charter.
18. Private vehicles can be used for evacuee transportation. ICBC informs that your personal vehicle insurance is valid (since not a regular use, not for payment) up to whatever limits you have on your policy. BUT, this is at your option; you certainly have the RIGHT TO REFUSE use of your personal vehicle. Don't hesitate to say no if you are not comfortable.

### So, how are we doing ?

Well, there's always room for improvement (just look at the list above!) and we are getting better all the time, but overall we recently took care of nearly 100 folks quite efficiently and with LOTS OF CARE AND COMPASSION. The City has completed mitigation measures (relocation of homes to higher areas) so that it's unlikely we will see evacuations from similar floods in coming years. However, keep in mind that there are MANY POTENTIAL, SIMILARLY-SIZED EVENTS that we could well respond to in the future– apartment fires, hazmat spills, gas leaks, police incidents etc. Such smaller events are much more likely than the 'big one'.

KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK !!!

Terry Lewis

## ACRONYMS

*I heard a voice speaking so loud and clear  
Using combinations of letters so strange to my ear.  
The letters I recognized but the form that they took  
Wasn't in the dictionary so where should I look?  
To the person who spoke them they really made sense  
What do you think - am I really that dense?*

### ATTENTION – During an Event

*PEP issues task number  
PREOC working with PECC sets up an EOC  
MCFD, SAR, SJA, TSA, RC are notified  
EPC tells ESSD to activate ESS and RC  
RC to use ICS and BCERMS in set up  
RC to provide R & R, FR and perhaps GL*

## HELP !

**I'M A NEW VOLUNTEER !!!!!!!!!!!!!**

## ESS – “Let me Count the Ways”

*We seem to focus a lot of attention on Reception Centre and Forms – however, we must not forget that we can be activated to provide support to our community in many other ways. The recent snowmobile disaster in Revelstoke is just one more example : ESS set up an Information Centre : to provide food and support to slide victims. There were 2 deaths, and 31 people injured – and hundreds involved in the incident – so no doubt a lot of Emotional Support was needed. Thank you to these ESS volunteers for 'being there'*

**“ESS – the heart of disaster response”**



## ESSA Conference

*There will not be a Vancouver Island Emergency Conference this year – however, our support organization is still planning to hold theirs.*

### May 29 – in Kelowna

*Conference programs are always very interesting. Our group cannot cover travel costs to this conference, however – if you plan on being in the area – we would gladly pay the \$ 40 Registration fee and the one night hotel bill – providing you register in time to take advantage of the special price ESSA has arranged. Obviously, we cannot sponsor too many to attend this conference – so if you are interested – and can make this commitment – please contact Marg Carr as soon as possible. ([cvess@shawcable.com](mailto:cvess@shawcable.com))*

More information : [www.ess.ca/conferences.html](http://www.ess.ca/conferences.html)



*Jane presents a Thank-You cake to staff at Plates for their hard work during our flood evacuations.*

Cake donated by Safeway- names of Plates staff on the cake



## HELP WANTED

If you are interested in becoming more involved in ESS please e-mail the Office at [cvess@shawcable.com](mailto:cvess@shawcable.com)

## Reception Centre Kit design changes

*Thanks to all of your comments – we certainly appreciate the input and all the ideas .*

*The R.C. kit at Moray is now in **FIVE** smaller bins - items you will need first are in Bin # 1.*

*Each bin's contents are clearly marked on the outside and contents inside are in labeled bags – for easy distribution to correct areas. Outlying kits can not be designed the same way because of space concerns, however – we will undertake to duplicate the packing system as much as we can and label things clearly. We hope you will find this a big improvement the next time we need to use these !.*

## ORIENTATION / WELCOME

An orientation for new volunteers was held on Monday March 8 at the ESS office. We would like to welcome Denise Damer, Ann Gadd, Carol Lansdowne, Margaret and Rob Neal.

Several of our new volunteers have already had some training or have had experience in emergency work. We are looking forward to getting to know you better as you become part of our group

We always need new volunteers so if you know of anyone who would like to become a part of our group please send the names and phone numbers to Kathy - [cvess@shawcable.com](mailto:cvess@shawcable.com) and we will schedule another Orientation.

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS WEEK May 3 – 9, 2010

ESS and CVEP along with the Red Cross, Fire, and Police will be giving emergency presentations in schools in Courtenay, Comox, and Cumberland. These presentations are made to the grade 5 students. We will also have a booth at the Driftwood Mall on the Saturday, May 8<sup>th</sup>. Volunteers are needed to help with the ESS part of the presentations and also to man the booth at the Mall.

If you are able to help please contact the ESS Office at [cvess@shawcable.com](mailto:cvess@shawcable.com)



## PET CARE TEAM NEWS

The Pet Care Team is looking for volunteers to help raise awareness at a few upcoming events

- May 8 - Sat : at Driftwood Mall – 10 – 3 pm
- June 5 – Sat : at Pet Lover's Lane Event held at Comox Band Hall on Dyke Rd – 10 – 3 pm
- Aug 27, 28, 29 – Fri, Sat, Sun : at the Comox Valley Fall Fair at exhibition grounds – time TBA
- Paws for a Cause : location TBA – usually 2<sup>nd</sup> week of September – 10 – 3 pm

The goal is to educate the public on subjects such as "grab 'n' go bags" for your pets --- how to register your pet when arriving at a reception centre as an evacuee – preparing alternate care arrangements, etc.

Please contact Jane Neve at 250.898.3173 or email to [info@canineconduct.ca](mailto:info@canineconduct.ca) --- or join us at our next meeting  
-- **Tues May 25 - 6:30 pm**  
at Moray St. office (3001 Moray Ave)

## Who's' Who ?

ESS D (Director)	- Marg Carr
Alternate ESSD	- Terry Lewis
Terry & Marg also attend monthly CVEP meetings (Comox Valley Emergency Program)	
Denman Island	- Mary Lou Morden
Hornby Island	- Ron Sitter
East Coordinators	- Terry Lewis
	- [REDACTED]
	- [REDACTED]
West Coordinators	- Kathy Swetnam
	- Sheila Clarson
	- Althea White
Training Coordinator	- Fran McLean
	looking for a replacement
Newsletter	- Susan Switzer
Kit Maintenance	- Jean Lewis
Office Assistance	- Jean Lewis
Level One Team	- Pete Quatrala
	- Hilary Perka
	- Patsy Cosby
	- Linda Leslie
	- Kathy Swetnam
	- Jean Lewis
Resource Acquisition	- Hilary Perka
Pet Care Team	- Jane Neve
Volunteer Management Team	
: Orientations	- Kathy Swetnam
: Interviews	- Sheila Clarson
: Record Keeping	- Elaine Hoever
: Recruitment	- Susan Hargreaves
Group Lodging	- [REDACTED]
Child Care	- [REDACTED]
Meet & Greet Leader	- [REDACTED]

As you can see – we do have some blank areas altogether --- but even the existing teams could always use a helping hand. Not to mention - there are ALWAYS more ideas than we have time to do !

## REMINDERS

**Criminal Record Checks** : those who have not yet completed these should arrange to do so ASAP. Forms are available at the office (Tues 10 – 2pm) or at Valley Links 310 Puntledge Road. If you have had one done for one of your other activities – please phone Valley Links 334-8063 and ask them to release information to ESS

**Change of Information** : should you change your phone number, cell phone, mailing address, email address, etc. – please remember to notify us !

**Your New Volunteer Management Team** : Sheila Clarson, Susan Hargreaves, Kathy Swetnam, Elaine Hoever. If you are interested in helping this team – please let us know.