

2011



REGIONAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Acknowledgements

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Village of Alliance

Muriel Fankhanel	Mayor
Del WickStrome	Councillor
Sue Thomas	Councillor
Laura Towers	Chief Administrative Officer
Denny Nielsen	Fire Chief

Town of Daysland

Jim Martin	Mayor
Marion Merritt	Councillor
Shari-Anne Doolaege	Chief Administrative Officer/Director Emergency of Management
Ed Chow	Assistant CAO/Deputy Director of Emergency Management
Greg Hamm	Fire Chief
Dallas Cannady	Fire Training Officer

Flagstaff County

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Wade Lindseth	Councillor
Shelly Armstrong	Chief Administrative Officer
Brent Hoyland	Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
Kim Cannady	Regional Emergency Services Coordinator

Village of Forestburg

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Fire Chief
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Village of Heisler

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Brendalee Loesch
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Chief Administrative Officer
Fire Chief

Town of Killam

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Joe Knieval

Deputy Mayor
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Gordon Thompson
Darlene Gotobed

Village of Lougheed

Debra Ann Smith

Rick Swistun

Brent Thompson

Sheri Cherowka
Sonny Leisner
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Town of Sedgewick

Tom Chaisson

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Village of Strome

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Clearwater Regional Fire Rescue Services

Cammie Laird Regional Fire Chief

Pincher Creek Fire Department

David Cox Fire Chief

Stettler Regional Fire Rescue Services

Mark Dennis Regional Fire Chief



Alliant AB



Heiter Howl, Heider, Adams, 1908

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Blount AB





*“Working together towards
the establishment of a
regional approach to fire
protection and emergency
management, based on
dedicated service,
leadership, integrity,
accountability and
caring...”*

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Executive Summary

The objective of this report is to research and evaluate the future direction of the municipalities within Flagstaff County and the County as a whole relevant to the future evolution of a regional plan with regards to emergency management and what that might look like. As well, the future of fire protection and what that could potentially look like on a regional basis. The consultants engaged for this process are Don Huestis, with Pamadon Consulting Inc, Murray Castle, with MSC Consulting, and Ken Kendall, with Kenneth Kendall Consulting. The consultants with the assistance from elected officials, senior administration and Fire Chiefs and senior officers were able to conduct over 25 interviews. Additional interviews were conducted with representatives of other Regional Fire Services. These

interviews allowed for the collection of data based on structure of the fire services within a regional system, the governance of the regional system, benefits of regionalization and lessons learned. The consultants received good cooperation from all Fire Departments and the elected and appointed officials within Flagstaff County.

The fact that the Regional Emergency Services Committee is a going concern clearly identifies that what might be considered the most difficult step is already completed. The next step is to move towards a cohesive regionalized system which takes advantage of existing assets and builds on these strengths to create stronger viable Fire Departments with the critical administrative support necessary to not only help them maintain sustainability but to also grow. Cooperation of Fire Departments at a regional level will provide a more effective response organization. Unnecessary duplications in apparatus and equipment can be identified and redundancy can be

reduced by sharing response duties, sharing of training opportunities and sharing of administrative staff expenses, which can create a safer more responsive service to the citizens of the region.

Another important aspect is to improve the emergency management planning and response to disasters. All member municipalities belonging to the Regional Emergency Services Committee have identified and expressed concerns that this is an area which needs focus and resources. There has never been a better reason or time to join forces and resources to mitigate and improve the response to a disaster event impacting a single community or multiple communities.

The summary of recommendations identifies several areas for action. These are identified below in point form followed by a quick summary of the recommendation. Further, in the report you will find a more detailed discussion regarding the

recommendation. Some of these recommendations are items, which can be acted on within the next twelve months, while other recommendations although able to be acted upon within twelve months, will probably require more time as there is a need to monitor movement towards improvement before it is prudent to move ahead. The recommendations focus on the following areas;

- Drafting a new fire services agreement
- Regional Emergency Services Committee Governance
- Create a funding agreement that establishes a financial support model for the Regional Emergency Services Committee to hire the Regional Fire Chief, part time administrative support position, and Regional Emergency Services Coordinator
- Creation of a Regional Fire Chief
- Creation of a part time administrative support position
- Creation of a two tiered fire department system and co response to an emergency scene
- Creation of a Regional Emergency Management Coordinator

Summary of Recommendations for the Regional Emergency Services Committee

1.0 Regional Emergency Services Committee Recommendations

1) A new funding agreement for fire protection should be created that is common for all municipalities. This agreement will have a fair funding formula that covers the operating expenses of the municipal Fire Departments when responding to a fire call in another municipality. We recommend that this agreement have a term of five years. It will be the responsibility of the municipal fire departments/urban municipality to track operating expenses and bring any funding shortfall to the Regional Emergency Services Committee's attention for review and consideration for potential amendment to the funding formula.

2) The Regional Emergency Services Committee, here after referred to as the Committee, will maintain its existing

structure with appointed elected officials from each municipality. The Committee may wish to evolve into a registered society, with a formal Board of Directors and registered charitable status. The consultants do not recommend that the Committee follow the newly created Emergency Services Commission as established by Beaver Emergency Services Commission. We feel that in fairness to the Beaver Emergency Services Commission time is needed to fully evaluate the merits and it is too early at this point to measure the effectiveness of the new Commission.

3) Establishment of financial support for the Committee. A funding agreement will be created for all member municipalities of the Committee. This funding agreement will be based on a formula and ability to pay. The funding agreement will provide an operational budget to support the staff that directly report to the Committee and the inclusive operational expenses of the employees.

4) The Committee creates a Regional Fire Chief (RFC) position. This position will report directly to the Committee and be responsible for coordinating and supporting the local Fire Departments with administration, training, purchasing, planning and if necessary command of emergency scenes.

5) This Committee will create a part time administrative support position that will report directly to the RFC. This position will be responsible for all administrative support duties required of the RFC and any additional positions created by the Committee. This position will also provide administrative support to the Committee.

6) The creation of a two-tiered Fire Department system for the region and co-response policy to emergency scenes will need to be created to ensure proper protection of citizens and appropriate response of properly trained fire fighters with necessary equipment.

7) The Committee will create a Regional Emergency Management Coordinator/Training position, which will be able to undertake all legislative obligations of each municipality required under the provincial legislation. This position would give municipalities a high level of administrative and technical expertise support if they wish to take advantage of this position. Timing for the creation of this position is dependent upon the desire of the member municipalities of the Committee. It may be possible to create and recruit for a part time position and then evaluate workload and evolve the position into fulltime employment in the future.

Methodology

Identified below is a review of the steps taken by the consultants to gather information from the municipalities and Fire Departments within Flagstaff County.

- The consultants were able to conduct over 25 interviews.
- The interviews varied in length from 1 ½ hours to over 4 hours.
- Group One – Elected officials, CAO's/Senior Management, and Director's of Emergency Management for their respective municipalities, where each participated in an interview process comprised of 60 questions.
- Group Two – Fire Chiefs and senior officers of each municipal Fire Department, where each participated in an interview process comprised of 60 questions.
- Group Three – Representatives of other regional fire and emergency management structures and subject

matter experts. David Zayonce, Regional Fire Chief, Beaver Emergency Services Commission. Fred Millar, Regional Fire Coordinator, Lacombe Regional Fire Service. George Roddick, Consultant and retired Alberta Disaster Services District Officer. Dieter Langer, Alberta Emergency Management Agency, Field Officer. Cammie Laird, Regional Fire Chief, Clearwater County. Julian Vueger, Director of Emergency Management, Lacombe County. Peter Krich, Fire Chief and Joe Mah, Deputy Fire Chief, City of Camrose.

- Referenced existing reports produced by Kim Cannady, Regional Emergency Services Coordinator and George Roddick, Consultant and retired Alberta Disaster Services, District Officer.
- Literary search on the topic of regional systems.

- Written information sources from other municipalities, regional fire and emergency management systems.
- Internet websites related to fire protection and emergency management.
- Experience and expertise of the consultants

Glossary

Authority Authority can be created with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between parties to transfer responsibility outlined in the MOU, and with clear indications of levels of administrative and financial support from the participating parties.

Certified Training Formal training done under specific guidelines for content and testing that allows recognition by an accredited body.

Contract Formal agreement between two or more parties specifying a level of service that must be provided in exchange for compensation.

Commission Commission is a legally recognized body established legislatively by the Province of Alberta. The regulation outlines the powers and responsibilities of the Board of Directors.

Committee An informal body made up of elected officials, appointed citizens, or members of administration representing each municipality. The Committee reviews issues, makes recommendations and reports these recommendations to municipal Council for their consideration and approval. A Committee has no legal authority, other than the powers identified in municipal bylaws or policies passed by municipal Council.

Chief Administrative Officer The person appointed to the top administrative position with a municipality as per the Municipal Government Act.

Chief Elected Official The person elected or appointed with a municipality under section 150 as per the Municipal Government Act.

Declaration of a State of Local Emergency

An order or resolution of a local authority under Section 18 of the Emergency Management Act for the Province of Alberta.

Director of Emergency Management

An individual appointed by the local authority to: prepare and coordinate emergency plans and programs for the municipality; act as a Director of Operations on behalf of the Municipal Emergency Management Agency; coordinate all emergency services and other resources used in an emergency; and perform other related duties.

Disaster

An event that results in serious harm to the safety, health, or welfare of people or in widespread damage to property.

Distance Learning

A disaster may be natural or manmade.
Courses offered at accredited institutions, such as Fire Etc. Alberta or Justice Institute, British Columbia, to allow completion of theoretical training in concert with practical experience and testing in appropriate locations and venues.

Emergency

An event that requires prompt coordination of action of trained personnel to protect the safety, health, and welfare of people or to mitigate damage to property.

Emergency Advisory Committee

A committee consisting of a member or members of the local authority appointed by municipal Council to advise and report to municipal Council on the

Emergency Management development of emergency plans and programs.

The management of emergencies concerning all hazards, including all activities and risk management measures related to prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

Agency An organization that acts as an agent of the local authority (Municipal Council) to carry out the municipal Council’s statutory powers and obligations under Emergency Management Act.

Hazard A potentially damaging physical event, brought on by natural or human activity that may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic

Scene Command disruption or environmental impact.

Is generally the most senior officer on scene of an emergency. Scene Command may be assumed by a more senior officer in that department or a higher authority, i.e. Regional Fire Chief.

Tier 1 Fire Department A Fire Department capable of providing adequate resources and trained personnel at an emergency scene on a consistent basis. A Tier 1 Fire Department has enough resources that they can engage in an interior fire attack, vehicle extrication (if properly trained and equipped) and a Rapid Intervention Team to assist in fire fighter rescue.

Tier 2 Fire Department A Fire Department capable of providing limited resources and trained personnel at an emergency scene. Tier 2 Fire Department acts as an early responder to protect exposures, early traffic control, and supports a Tier 1 Department at a large emergency scene.

Light Rescue Accessing and extricating victims from motor vehicle crashes (MVC) or other accident scenarios.

Maintenance Training Periodic training provided to maintain skill sets previously acquired from a certified training course.

Mitigation Sustained actions taken to eliminate or reduce risk and impacts posed by hazards well before an emergency or disaster

occurs. Mitigation may also occur during a disaster event.

Municipal Emergency Plan Is a plan prepared by a local authority (Municipal Council) under Section 11, of the Emergency Management Act of Alberta.

Mutual Aid Agreement A formal agreement between two or more parties to provide assistance if available. Assistance is provided upon request from one of the parties to the other.

NFPA National Fire Protection Association is a set of standards that have been adopted by numerous authorities worldwide. These standards specify minimum levels of fire protection. This standard is recognized in Canada as a recommended practice but is not

a mandatory practice. Municipalities may adopt certain portions. NFPA is referenced in most Federal and Provincial codes.

Officer

An individual within a Fire Department designated to be in command of an emergency crew or on scene command.

Volunteer

Designates those Fire Departments that are staffed with volunteers from the community.

Pumper/Engine

An Emergency Fire Response Vehicle with a pump, water tank, hoses, ladders, and other equipment necessary for use at a fire emergency. This vehicle can also be referred to as an “Engine” under the Incident Command System.

Qualified Training

Formal training by a recognized instructor that provides a certificate upon successful completion of a certified course.

Regional Emergency Services Coordinator

A staff member of Flagstaff County tasked with assisting local Fire Departments and Emergency Management officials.

Regional Fire Chief

Is a staff member who directly reports to the Regional Emergency Advisory Committee. Responsibilities for this position are clearly identified in a job description and authority and responsibility to each member municipality is recognized in each community’s fire bylaw. The Regional Fire Chief does have the authority to assume incident command of an

Rescue emergency scene if he/she deems it appropriate.

Those activities directed at locating endangered persons at an emergency incident, removing those persons from danger, treating injured and providing for transport to an appropriate health care facility.

Rescue Vehicle

A vehicle operated by the Fire Department carrying equipment to assist at an emergency in the safe retrieval of victims.

Resilience

The ability to resist or withstand impacts on a community from an extreme disaster event.

Tanker/Tender

A vehicle with a large capacity water tank and necessary equipment to provide water at a

Governing Body

rural emergency scene for firefighting purposes.

A formal or semi formal group of individuals tasked with making policy decisions and setting direction for the future.

Society

A Society is an incorporated legally recognized body with a Board of Directors, bylaws, annual meeting requirement and may have the ability to raise funds and issue tax receipts, if registered to do so.

Background

Flagstaff County in partnership with all the urban municipalities within its boundary requested a proposal to conduct a study on the merits of a Regional Fire and Emergency Management Services concept.

A Committee within the County consists of all urban municipalities and the over arching rural municipality, this is referred to as the Regional Emergency Services Committee which meets regularly to discuss relevant emergency management and protective services issues. Membership consists of elected representation from each municipality.

Presently Flagstaff County has a position that is the Regional Emergency Services Coordinator and is responsible for the areas of fire, emergency management, and bylaw enforcement for the County, and provides technical support to the urban municipalities who request assistance for technical fire support.

This position was created in response to a report which recommended its creation in 2004. The participating municipalities and populations (Alberta 2010 Official Population List) of the Regional Emergency Services Committee are listed below.

Participating Municipality	Population
• Flagstaff County	3506
• Town of Daysland	818
• Town of Hardisty	761
• Town of Killam	1019
• Town of Sedgewick	891
• Village of Alliance	197
• Village of Galahad	134
• Village of Forestburg	895
• Village of Heisler	150
• Village of Lougheed	254
• Village of Strome	252
Total Population	8877

Presently the Fire Departments are on average responding to approximately 130 – 150 calls per year. The variable rate of calls is consistent to many conditions outside the influence of the municipalities. These conditions range from traffic volumes, weather conditions, road conditions, and human error and neglect. The inability to control conditions is one of the deciding factors leading to the need for a volunteer fire department. We have identified some facts to consider when reading this report, as these statistics help put into context the environment of providing a fire prevention and suppression service to your municipality.

- There are approximately 10,000 to 13,000 Fire Fighters in the Province of Alberta. The statistic is variable depending on what source you reference.
- Between 77% and 82% of these fire fighters are volunteers depending on source you reference.
- 90% of Alberta communities are protected by volunteer Fire Fighters.

- Based on national studies, each volunteer supplies his/her community on average over 400 hours per year of volunteer service. This number is variable based on call volumes, training nights and other community obligations.
- There are 430 Fire Departments in Alberta.
- 388 of these departments are volunteer.
- 34 of these departments are combined paid staff and volunteers.
- 8 of these departments are fulltime.

Flagstaff County is approximately 150 kilometers south east of Edmonton. The County is approximately 1,014,000 acres or 4,102 square kilometers. The County relies on oil and gas activities and farming as its base industries. Highway 53 and 13 travel east/west through the county and Highway 36 bisects the county north/south.

Presently all municipalities within the County are served by approximately 150 volunteer fire fighters who vary in age from late teens to retirement age. It should be noted that one member

has served as a volunteer for fifty two years, a phenomenal feat that deserves to be recognized in this report.

Given the average total call volume of approximately 140 calls per year being responded to by the ten municipal Fire Departments; it is fair to say that approximately every 2.6 days there is an incident that requires a response from a volunteer Fire Department.

If life was that predictable it would be easy to resource your departments to respond to an event every 2.6 days. However, the challenge facing municipal Fire Departments is that statistics do not clearly represent the reality they face daily. It is more likely that calls come in bunches. This is especially true during a dry spring and or summer in which grass fires are prevalent or during a winter storm or holiday weekend when weather conditions or traffic volumes increase the likelihood of motor vehicle crashes, (MVC).

The purpose of an Emergency Management Plan is to save lives, protect property, protect the environment, and reduce the negative impact on the economy. The highest importance of all responsibilities is the protection of life. Emergency Management does this by raising awareness of the public and making them understand the importance of preparedness, and with preparedness comes a more sustainable and resilient community when disaster strikes. The Government of Canada identifies four interdependent risk based functions.



Prevention and Mitigation

Eliminate or reduce the impacts and risks of hazards through pro active measures taken before an emergency or disaster occurs. Prevention and mitigation can be considered independently or jointly.

Preparedness

Ready to respond to a disaster and manage its consequences through measures taken prior to an event, i.e. emergency response plans, mutual aid agreements, proper equipment and regular exercises of emergency response plans.

Response

To act during or immediately after a disaster to manage its consequences by using, emergency public communication and information systems, (EPWS), emergency search and rescue, evacuation, medical response

Recovery

Restore conditions to an acceptable level through measures taken immediately after a disaster event, i.e. reconstruction, financial assistance, trauma counseling, and a need to get back to everyday life.

Emergency management is an area in which a high percentage of municipalities across the province ignore their responsibilities to update and exercise their emergency/disaster plan on a regular basis. The Provincial Government requires a municipality to exercise their plan at least once every four years. Emergency Management Plans and exercises are one of those responsibilities that continuously fall down the priority list as more pressing daily operational concerns require the attention of municipal officials. Disaster plans aren't needed until there is an event, and statistically speaking how often are events likely to happen. In almost all cases a natural or manmade disaster is an event that happens elsewhere and to other people. However, to ignore this responsibility of preparedness is taking a risk with the lives of the citizens in your community, and potentially exposing your community to liability if the response to an event is deemed grossly negligent. That being said it is important to not only update your plan

annually, but a municipality should exercise their disaster plan more than once every four years. A reason to update and exercise your plan, preferably annually, is due to the ever changing volunteer base at the Fire Department, community volunteers, and staffing changes in municipal departments. Not to mention having newly elected officials every three years makes this exercise vital to the municipality.

In our interviews with elected officials and CAO's we found a consistent concern raised by all the participating municipalities that they wanted to be better trained and prepared for a possible event that would be beyond the resources of their community. The support was unanimous from communities on the need for a regional approach to emergency management planning, response, training, and maintenance of Emergency Management Plans. There was also unanimous support for a Regional Emergency Management Plan which would be an over arching document that would provide a plan and coordinating tool for a Regional Emergency Management Coordinator.

Supporting Information for Recommendations



Regional Fire Service Recommendations

Recommendation #1 Create a new Fire Service Funding Agreement

A new long term funding agreement needs to be created with a fair and reasonable funding formula. A high majority of the municipalities interviewed felt that the existing base level funding formula from Flagstaff County was adequate. This funding consists of \$10,000 per year fixed grant plus 50% of all operating costs of the fire service. In reviewing the responses from the urban municipalities and reviewing the number of calls, we agree that the base level of funding from the County is appropriate. We do feel that all of the urban municipalities need to examine their accounting practices to ensure that they are recognizing all operating expenses of the Fire Departments enabling them to make a properly supported request from the County for the 50% financial support of all operating costs. A practical and feasible argument in support of

the operational funding of costs to the fire service is based on call volumes. Statistically the majority of the call volumes are rural calls. Therefore, having a flat rate funding of the Fire Departments will help offset the expenses of these calls.

In consultation with a fire chief from southern Alberta, his department is funded based on total hours at rural calls versus total hours at urban calls. A funding ratio is created based on the ratio of hours spent servicing the urban municipality and rural fire district. Not an unreasonable approach, but can be time consuming when call volumes are high. The formula which we the consultants feel should be given the most consideration is the example identified below. The funding formula example used in another region developed by CAO's of that Region is reflective of a fixed and variable method of calculating a proportionate share for funding. We would suggest that the municipalities within the Flagstaff County and the Flagstaff County as a whole consider this potential formula

as it has merit and deserves fair consideration. The formula consists of three components which are used to each provide 33.33% of the funding for each component. Each fire district is calculated using this formula. For discussion purposes I will use a hypothetical fire district and urban municipality which provides fire suppression to the rural citizens of that fire district.

❖ **Component 1**

The first 33.33% of the funding ratio is based on population count for the urban municipality and the rural residents living within that rural fire district.

❖ **Component 2**

Parcel count is used to create a funding ratio for the second 33.33% of the funding formula. Parcel count comes from the urban municipality tax roll, and the rural municipality tax roll for that respective fire district.

❖ **Component 3**

Call volume is used to create a funding ratio for the third 33.33% of the funding formula. Emergency call volumes are variable and change annually so the recommended process for establishing a proper call volume is to use a five year rolling average of fire calls in the urban municipality and rural fire district.

Within the Flagstaff County there are areas in which funding needs to be improved. Presently there is no recognition for the response of a second pumper from a municipality to a rural call. This is a minor administrative change and easily supportable from a policy perspective. Another change required is the payment for the use of contracted water tankers. There seems to have been a loophole in which this was missed in the original agreement. We would strongly suggest that Flagstaff County move away from using private water suppliers as a source of fire fighting water. There are legitimate concerns about quality of water and timeliness of response. We would suggest that the County look to purchasing at least 3 water tenders. This is discussed later in another recommendation.

We also found an inconsistency in minimum hours charged for a call. Some municipalities charge a minimum of one hour for all calls where others charge as much as a three hour minimum.

A consistent minimum needs to be established for all departments. We would recommend the following:

- One hour minimum for false alarms or enroute cancel of fire units. The one hour minimum gives the volunteers time to return to hall and wash trucks before letting dispatch know they are back in service.
- Two hour minimum for a response to all other calls.

Another factor to be considered is that this Fire Service Agreement is not a one way deal; there are also expectations of the municipality receiving the service. With that in mind we would recommend the following points be considered:

- The Agreement should clearly state levels of baseline funding, emergency response funding and capital funding levels for future acquisitions of property, plant and equipment.
- This Agreement will also clearly identify the expected levels of service, present and future training of fire fighters, records management, and future business plans for the Fire Department, and future commitments and timelines to establishing Standard Operating

Guidelines (SOG) for those departments requiring SOG's.

- Amendments to the Agreement should be reviewed and approved by the Committee before being forwarded to the County and urban municipalities for consideration.

The majority of the concerns raised are with regards to the County charging their residents more for attending a fire call than what they were paying the fire department to respond to that call. There are urban municipalities which also charge their citizens for attending fire calls within their corporate boundaries. This is a trend amongst some municipalities to help recover the expense of the fire equipment. Although it is a trend, we believe it is a policy which is financially detrimental to the citizens of the municipality in which they live. We believe that the positive public relations gained by a municipality that does not charge for a fire response outweighs the financial gain.

Emergency service operational and capital expenses are the responsibility of the tax base, and each property should pay the appropriate amount of taxes to cover the expenses of emergency services. If Flagstaff County was willing to consider the removal of the policy charging rural property

owners for responding to a fire call it would remove the argument/concern raised by fire departments regarding the disparity between charges levied against property owners versus fees paid to the responding department. All municipalities within and including Flagstaff County should consider a change in policy to charge only for those fire calls that were set negligently, or due to fire code violations proven by investigation.

Recommendation #2 Governance of the Regional Emergency Advisory Committee (Committee)

We believe that the very existence of the Regional Emergency Services Committee is a major achievement in itself and provides a solid foundational base from which to evolve into something more formal. We would recommend that the Regional Emergency Services Committee be renamed to the Regional Emergency Advisory Committee.

This title would be consistent with the Province of Alberta Emergency Management Act, and would be a title already recognized in provincial legislation. We would recommend that the creation or amendment of any and all bylaws by all municipalities be done to formally recognize the Committee with representation by all participating municipalities. These bylaws will also recognize the Committee's ability to have staff directly reporting to it. The Committee will establish a set

of guiding principles and an operating and governance policy which will outline the following basic tenets.

- level of responsibility to member municipalities
- level of authority of the Committee
- decision making process
- how the Committee conducts business
- annual business planning
- annual budgeting submissions for Fire Departments to the Committee for recommendations to respective councils
- annual budget submission from the Committee to respective councils for approval
- reporting process to each member municipality

The Committee will also function as a body which reviews and recommends fire department protocols, proposals and requests

from municipalities for amendments to fire related agreements.

The Committee will offer opinions on fire related issues to respective councils asking for advice and guidance and direct the actions of fire and emergency management staff who directly report to the Committee.

The future steps for the Committee are dependent upon the desire of the member municipalities and the degree of formal recognition desired. The next logical step is to become a registered society with formal bylaws, a board of elected representatives from each community, a requirement for an annual meeting, and the need to have an annual audit conducted. If there is the political will, we would recommend that the paperwork to become a registered society start within the next 12 months. The creation of the Society will also create the opportunity to pursue registered charitable status which will help fund raising initiatives and allow tax receipts for donations to be issued. This will help Fire Chiefs raise money

for each hall. We recommend a step in this direction in two or three years when time permits and some of the more important administrative, training and operational issues have been streamlined and perfected.

In our research, we examined the Beaver Emergency Services Commission and interviewed the regional Fire Chief, David Zayonce. We certainly see merit in the process and potential future growth of the Commission. The biggest concern is lack of operational time with the complete governance process in place. As of this date there has not been formal acceptance of the Commission bylaws, and there are still many details needed to be looked at. This is not a negative reflection of the Commission or Chief Zayonce's efforts, it is a realization of the amount of effort and time required to properly develop, recognize and formally implement a Regional Commission with all Fire Departments operating under a singular command

and the formal creation of a Regional Emergency Management Plan which encompasses all member municipalities.

We also conducted research with the Lacombe Regional Fire Service (LRFS), and interviewed Regional Fire Coordinator, Fred Millar. The LRFS was created over twelve years ago and consists of six municipalities including the Lacombe County. It has evolved to a recognized registered society, but has no desire to pursue the commission model. All Fire Departments and municipalities are resistant to this next level and therefore no advancement has been made. It was recognized that political sensitivities prevented what was initially thought of as a natural step and end goal of becoming a Commission. It has been determined that all requirements from the Fire Departments have been met and they are happy with the results to this date. LRFS started as a Committee similar to the Regional Emergency Services Committee in Flagstaff County. Its primary and only focus was to improve the Fire Departments

within Lacombe County. Only one municipality does not participate in the regional system. The early decision made by Lacombe County and the Town of Lacombe was to proceed with those communities who wished to participate. Initially LRFS started with two municipalities and gradually added one per year as other municipalities realized the merits.

Governance was established with Lacombe County and the Town of Lacombe each having two voting representatives from Council. Each additional municipality would be represented by one voting representative from Council. That voting structure is maintained today.

If the participating municipalities are willing to accept this recommendation, we would strongly recommend the creation of an administrative transition team which consists of two senior administration staff, one rural representative and one urban representative. These two people are tasked with the responsibility of transitioning the present Committee to a

registered society with all its requirements and assist in the recruitment of a Regional Fire Chief. The transition team would also be responsible for the creation of an organization chart which defines the accountability requirements of each position to the Committee and the accountability of each respective municipality and their fire department. The organization chart will define the over arching responsibility of the Regional Fire Chief to the respective fire departments and the accountability of the municipal fire chiefs to the Committee, municipal Councils and Regional Fire Chief. One of the responsibilities of transitioning to a registered society is to create a voting structure. There are several options available, what should be taken into consideration is the amount of financial support required to make this new entity a reality. We would recommend that a double majority voting structure be considered. A double majority requires two tests to be passed before a resolution can be passed. Because there are 11

municipalities we would recommend the following process and requirements to gain a double majority.

- First majority is the requirement to have at least 7 of the 11 municipalities vote in support of a resolution
- Second majority is the requirement that these 7 municipalities represent at least 70% of the total population of all 11 municipalities

When both of these requirements are met, the resolution passes and has the full support of the Committee.

Recommendation #3 Funding for Regional Emergency Advisory Committee

Create a funding formula that is fair, reasonable and recognizes the service provided by the Committee to the member municipalities within Flagstaff County. This funding formula should be reviewed every five years to ensure reasonableness and sustainability. The funding will be used to pay the employees who directly report to the Committee. In return for funding being received by the Committee, an agreed upon set of Terms of Reference should clearly state expected levels of service provided to member municipalities. Since the Committee has a Regional Fire Chief and part time administrative support staff, there should be deliverables provided. These deliverables will be fire focused with regards to present and future training of fire fighters, records management, and future business plans for the fire departments. It should also identify future commitments and

timelines to establishing Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) for those departments requiring SOG's. If an additional position is required that would be the Regional Emergency Management Coordinator for the region, then additional deliverables focusing on emergency management will need to be expressed in writing.

The identified funding, staffing and terms of reference with expectations of deliverables will create a Committee with a purpose and focus to deliver a service to member municipalities (see pages 64 to 66) for the funding proposals for the Regional Emergency Advisory Committee.

Recommendation #4 Creation of a Regional Fire Chief Position

A Regional Fire Chief (RFC) position should be created and approved by the Committee. This position directly reports to the Committee. The Committee must clearly define the authority of the Regional Fire Chief over the municipal fire departments by recognizing that the following operational expectations of the position can only be achieved if the Regional Fire Chief has the authority to make appropriate decisions to improve training, communication, response, purchasing, capital budgeting, public education, and technical support to the Committee, Councils, and administrations. This can only be done through direct recognition within the municipal fire bylaws of each municipality and supporting policy statements in each respective municipality. Financial support for the position will come from the respective member municipalities as identified in Recommendation #3.

The pay structure for this employee and others hired including, benefits, vacation, sick days, and all other employee policies will mirror that of Flagstaff County. When hired the RFC and administrative support employee will report directly to the Committee.

The position will be located at the County Administration building, or another location determined by the Committee. Municipal fire bylaws for all participating municipalities will be amended and updated or rescinded and replaced with a new Fire Bylaw to recognize the Regional Fire Chief and this position's role and levels of responsibility. This position will assume the following responsibilities;

- Develop an environment of cooperation and collaboration between departments, while maintaining the autonomy the individual Fire Departments seek.
- Review and verify existing training levels of all municipal fire fighters.

- Establish a reasonable training level expectation and program for each Fire Department within Flagstaff County.
- Create a training program which creates opportunities for all departments to share experience and train in recognized distance education programs while able to stay in the region. This will be accomplished by the creation of lesson plans and scheduling that tries to accommodate the challenges faced by volunteers and their busy lives.
- Create an emergency response protocol that will automatically dispatch two departments to an emergency scene.
- Conduct a review process that will create a Two Tiered Fire Department standard within the region. Tier 1 Department is capable of bringing appropriate equipment and personnel to an emergency scene in a timely fashion. Tier 2 is a Department that is capable of responding to an emergency scene and providing initial size up for a Tier 1 Department, exposure protection to adjacent structures, and assets, establish traffic control,

and provide additional support members to a Tier 1 Department.

- Create a template Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) manual which will be used as a guide for each Fire Department that requires the manual. The SOG manual will be customized to best reflect and represent each Fire Department, while keeping in mind that there should be some commonality with base level SOG's. This SOG template will be used as a starting point for the creation of SOG's specific to each municipal Fire Department. The creation of SOG's for each department is fundamental to creating a consistent and safe work environment for the volunteer fire fighters and guidelines by which the department is to follow when required to deal with a specific issue. The SOG's also act as a learning tool for new fire fighters as it is a reference for all department procedures from equipment maintenance, training, to emergency response to an incident are simple examples of likely SOG's found in such a document.

- Create a joint purchasing process which will alleviate duplication of efforts with Regional Fire Departments and create potential savings with bulk purchasing. The purchasing process will focus on establishing common standards for all firefighting equipment and apparatus.
- Create a ten year capital equipment replacement plan for all property, plant and equipment for all Fire Departments within the region. Long term capital purchase plans help coordinate equipment purchases by all Fire Departments. This coordinated effort helps bring consistency to financial budgeting, this helps elected officials and CAO's better manage cash flow debenture debt on costly purchases. Coordinated purchasing helps control quantity and quality of items purchased; bulk purchasing will improve value for the tax payer dollar. The coordinated purchasing process will also relieve the Fire Chiefs of this responsibility as it can be time consuming. The creation of the capital plan will relieve this responsibility of the municipal Fire Chiefs, but still permit them to play a major role in identifying their needs for the future.
- Examine changing the focus of fire apparatus purchase from a Class A pumper focus to a customized approach based on training levels of fire fighters, manpower response levels, and operational needs. We have determined that not every hall can support a Class A pumper. This would suggest investigating the use of a mini pumper. We also suggest that Flagstaff County investigate the purchase of frontline water tenders with water capacities of not less than 3000 gallons and a pumping capacity of 500 gallons per minute. It would be suggested that three or four of these trucks strategically located could improve fire response in the rural areas.
- Monitor communication systems used for radio systems and pagers. Ensure that all systems work effectively and efficiently and ensure that all departments are properly served by radio and paging systems.
- Absorb all administrative paperwork, and fire report responsibilities, ensuring that this is completed in a timely fashion and is accurate. Where trained and

capable, conduct fire investigations for all Fire Departments within the region

- Create a public education and information program regionally, that educates the public about fire prevention, the duties, challenges and successes of a volunteer Fire Department.
- Create contacts with other Regional Fire Chiefs and senior government fire contacts to assist in the education and improvement of fire based services in the region. Ensure that where possible, grant application opportunities are brought to the attention of the Committee and affected municipalities so that all funding possibilities are considered.
- Act as a subject matter expert and information source for Fire Departments and elected and appointed officials for each municipality. It is important that municipal decision makers get timely accurate information about capital purchase equipment.

Recommendation #5 Creation of a Part time Administrative Support Position

Creation of a part time Administrative Support position (.5FTE) to provide a support function administratively to the Regional Fire Chief and the Regional Emergency Management Coordinator and any additional positions created in the future.

This position will assist the Regional Fire Chief with the required administrative paperwork generated by each Fire Department. Will assist the Chief and the Committee in the following functions:

- Assisting the Regional Fire Chief with drafting Standard Operating Guidelines for review by each department.
- Filling out and compiling monthly fire reports.
- Records Management.

- Assisting with the creation of any operating policies required by the Chief or the Regional Emergency Management Coordinator.
- Assist with daily enquiries made by members of the public.
- Create and distribute the agenda packages for the Committee.
- Coordinate meetings of the Committee, contact members when communication is required, take minutes of each meeting and send correspondence pertaining to Committee business.
- Assist the Regional Fire Chief administratively in all of his/her duties and assume all other duties as assigned.

Recommendation #6 Creation of Two Tiered Fire Department Response

This was identified as a potential project of the Regional Fire Coordinator. We feel as consultants, this particular issue requires additional comment and warrants being identified as a recommendation. In our information gathering process it became apparent that there are some departments better equipped and trained to handle larger and more challenging emergency scenes. Those departments should be recognized as a Tier 1 Department as they are able to bring more resources to an incident. The Tier 2 Departments have less equipment and less training but are just as willing to respond to an emergency call, but they bring fewer resources. Given this challenge we recommend an immediate dual response emergency page for a minimum of two departments to an emergency event. If the emergency is in the area of a Tier 2 Department they will respond with the expectation of the following:

- Initial scene size up and command of scene
- Exposure protection of high value assets
- Traffic control at MVC and assist with first aid and vehicle extrication
- Supply additional man power to the Tier 1 Department upon arrival

It should be noted that the Tier 2 Senior Officer/Fire Chief is still scene command of the event. This is important to note and should be recognized. A Tier 2 Senior Officer/ Fire Chief may hand over command to another department chief. The Regional Fire Chief may assume command if they feel it is warranted. If the emergency is in the area of a Tier 1 Fire Department, a Tier 2 Department will also respond. The expectation of a Tier 1 Department is the following:

- Initial scene size up and command of scene
- Exposure protection of high value assets

- Determination of whether the situation warrants offensive or defensive measures
- Accept help from arriving Tier 1 or Tier 2 Department and allocate resources accordingly

From our data gathering we would be happy to supply our thoughts of how to rank the departments, but this was not an expectation of this report.

Recommendation #7 Creation of Regional Emergency Management/Training Coordinator

Creation of a fulltime Regional Emergency Management/Training Coordinator position that will report directly to the Committee. Financial support for the position will come from the respective participating member municipalities. The position will be located at the County Administration building, or another location determined by the Committee. Municipal Emergency Management Bylaws will be amended and updated or rescinded and replaced with a new Municipal Emergency Management Bylaw to recognize the Regional Emergency Management Coordinator and their role and levels of responsibility. Emergency Management Training will be a primary responsibility of this position and this person will also assist in the fire training of volunteer fire fighters with the appropriate recognized fire training courses. Required duties for this position are as follows.

- Ensure that all Municipal Emergency Management Plans are up to date and amended when necessary for all member municipalities
- Ensure that all necessary Emergency Management training is received by elected officials and staff for all member municipalities
- Coordinate and manage all training exercises conducted by all member municipalities no less than once every two years
- Ensure all member municipalities are in complete compliance with provincial legislation
- Act as Director of Emergency Management for those municipalities who request that position to be filled and formally recognize this request through bylaw and the Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- Provide assistance to any member municipality that chooses to maintain their own appointed Director of Emergency Management

- Provide assistance as public information officer during a disaster event to those municipalities who request help in that area
- Provide assistance to the Regional Fire Chief with training and coordination of training of Fire Fighters within the Region

If determined necessary, coordinate the creation of a Regional Emergency Management Plan for all member municipalities of the Committee. Creation of a Regional Emergency Management Plan that provides an over arching emergency response plan for all member municipalities that will provide a practical all hazards response to man made or natural disasters that impact any and all municipalities. This regional plan will provide a consistent coordinated response to any event by bringing to bear all resources available to the communities of the Committee. Coordinated response to a disaster event will be faster and better focused to reduce loss of life, injury to citizens and mitigation of property damage.

**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
Analysis (SWOT)**



Environmental Scan

A Regional Environmental Scan is completed by use of several different sources of information. Determine existing challenges being faced by all other volunteer Fire Departments and municipal governments across the province. The consultants also conducted two other processes. The first is referred to as a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. It is a simple method of determining what is being faced by an entity within the environment they operate. The second process is the Expectation/Reality/Outcome process which identifies the expectations of stakeholders, versus the reality of the resources available, with what is the likely outcome to meet the expectation.

It should be noted that the weaknesses and threats identified by the Departments within Flagstaff County are similar to those identified by all volunteer Fire Departments in North America. The demographic shift to an aging population, increased demands on families to have the need for two incomes, competition with other organizations looking for volunteers and the myriad of other distractions of a modern day life is severely impacting volunteer Fire Departments. You couple these challenges with a need to receive a high degree of training and the demanding work they are expected to do; which can have an impact on one's physical and mental well being. Reasonable people can see the challenges of maintaining a strong volunteer base. In the past, it was felt that the efforts and service provided by a volunteer Fire Department was acceptable to the public. Today however that is not the case as Fire Departments and their respective municipalities have been held accountable for their actions. Society in general is

expecting more for their tax dollars and is not as accommodating to the Fire Departments best efforts. Today municipalities are expected to determine the roles and responsibilities of a Fire Department as well as provide the necessary resources to that department. Using volunteers to provide fire protection and emergency response has definite economic advantages, but these advantages have to be tempered with the reality of slower response times, increased travel distances for rural areas and ability to maintain volunteer staffing levels and the level of training competency. That being said it becomes incumbent on municipalities to take a more active role in determining service levels, training, and practical equipment levels. There has been discussion in various circles of the need to establish a provincial standard for training levels for volunteer fire departments. This is not feasible and practical as setting a minimum standard could conceivably be unattainable for a very high majority of small urban fire

departments thus signally the end of fire protection for large portions of the province. To support the idea of a provincial minimum standard seems practical and reasonable at first glance, the pressure it would create for smaller departments and their volunteers would have a negative effect of the future sustainability of those departments. These challenges in today's world means that municipalities must be cognizant of the challenges faced by Fire Departments to maintain a reasonable volunteer base which is capable of responding to calls 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Municipalities and Fire Departments are under the belief that having top quality fire fighting apparatus in the Fire Hall means that the insurance rates for property owners is lower. That isn't always the case because equipment is only one criterion. This requires additional explanation for clarification for elected and appointed officials.

The insurance companies use three rated levels as determined by the underwriters to determine the cost of your insurance. Given this information, we feel that this should be a guide for future equipment decisions and a strong reason to support the benefits of a Regional Fire Chief and appropriate administrative support and a reflective command structure that is recognized by the Municipalities. Refer to the table on the following page for a synopsis of the three levels.

Basic representation of the underwriters rating system

Level of Protection

Expected Requirements

<p>PROTECTED</p>	<p>Occurs in large urban municipalities with paid fulltime professional Departments.</p>
<p>SEMI PROTECTED</p>	<p>Highest level possible for volunteer Fire Department serviced municipalities. Must have at least one Class A pumper no older than 20 years old. Must have a second Class A pumper no older than 25 years old. Must have at least 15 members on the volunteer fire roster with a 24/7 response capability trained to an interior fire attack level. Must also have a command authority structure of officers with proper administrative structures and SOG's and paper supporting training of all volunteers</p>
<p>UNPROTECTED</p>	<p>Any area more than five miles/eight kilometers from a Fire hall.</p>

The second SWOT analysis is with regards to emergency management and what are the present day expectations that society has with regards to responding to an incident. It should be noted that it is almost impossible to battle Mother Nature and when she strikes the results can be catastrophic. The public doesn't expect the local government to completely protect them from Mother Nature, but they do expect governments to react decisively and with all the resources they have at their practical disposal and manage the landslide of additional resources that end up in your community during a major event.

Disasters are inevitable although we do not always know when and where they will happen. But their worst effects can be partially or completely mitigated by preparation, early warning, and swift, decisive responses. Disaster management aims to reduce the occurrence of disasters if possible and to reduce the impact of those that cannot be prevented. Inadequate management of risks can produce extreme adverse

consequences for communities and the citizens that live in those communities. There is no distinction between a rural and urban community, the disaster event doesn't adhere to a boundary between urban and rural. A rural municipality is as much responsible for an emergency plan and how it responds to an emergency as an urban municipality. Disasters are events that have a huge impact on humans and/or the environment. Disasters require government intervention. They are not always unpredictable. Early storm warning systems can reduce loss of life and injury. Manmade disasters like dangerous good incidents can be mitigated by proper planning. This predictability provides opportunities to plan for, prevent and to lessen the impact of disasters. In Canada and in Alberta, communities are expected to take an all hazards approach to disaster planning and response by addressing exposures to both manmade and natural hazards. It should be noted that each municipality's ability to respond to a disaster event is

incumbent upon its ability to bring its resources to bear on the event. It is obvious that larger municipalities have more resources to react, but even large municipalities can become overwhelmed. In times when a disaster event exceeds the ability for the municipality to cope, it becomes necessary to request help from neighboring municipalities and senior levels of government.

On the following pages is the first SWOT analysis information gathered from each respective Fire Department and combined into common groupings. That is then followed by the Emergency Management SWOT analysis.

SWOT ANALYSIS:

All Municipal Fire Departments within Flagstaff County:

Strengths

What are the three top strengths of your Fire Department today?

Here are the top four most popular choices:

- ❖ **Good core of Fire Fighter volunteers:** All ten departments were supportive and in agreement. We identified the following comments as these were commonly mentioned (dedicated, trustworthy, willing to learn, good leaders)
- ❖ **Support from Town/Village Council:** Eight Fire Departments felt they were supported by the municipality. Two departments did not mention a concern about the support of Council
- ❖ **Good apparatus and equipment:** Eight departments felt they had good apparatus and equipment
- ❖ **Good response times:** Three departments felt they had good response times

Other strengths: Four additional points were made that were thought to be strengths:

1. central location
2. financially self-sufficient
3. great working relations with Hardisty F. D.
4. local industry support

Are you aware of another Fire Department of similar size you feel is an excellent bench mark for your Department?

Killam (3 votes); Hardisty (2); Sedgewick (1); Forestburg (1); Daysland (1); Viking (1); Camrose City (2); Wainwright (1); No answer (1)

Weaknesses

What are the three most critical weaknesses of your Fire Department?

- ❖ **Unavailability of Fire Fighters:** Eight departments were concerned and listed the following reasons; working, farming, marginal core of volunteers and holidays. Two departments did not identify any concerns
- ❖ **Recruitment and retention:** Seven departments were concerned about recruitment and retention, three departments were not concerned
- ❖ **Commitment:** Six departments were concerned about the following issues; aging, burn-out, the young follow jobs, lack of community spirit, lack of willingness to take training. Four departments were not concerned about commitment
- ❖ **Training:** Four departments were concerned about training and identified the following; lack of

willingness, consistent delivery of training, limited opportunities to take training

- ❖ **Aging apparatus equipment and/or Fire hall:** Four departments expressed concerns about the age of the equipment and or the Fire hall
- ❖ **Other Comments:** Two departments felt there was insufficient funding and one department identified a concern regarding a communications tower unserviceable

Opportunities

What are leading opportunities for your Fire Department today?

- ❖ **New activity and growth** in oil & gas exploration in the area
- ❖ **Recruiting Drive** is an opportunity to add new members
- ❖ **Regionalization** could create opportunities for Fire Departments
- ❖ **Training** East Central Emergency Training,(ECET), Enbridge hi-angle, pipeline mock disaster, above ground tank
- ❖ **Buy new apparatus and/or equipment: purchase of** water rescue equipment, bush truck, 3000 gal aluminum water tank donation from Gibsons Energy
- ❖ **Municipal population growth**
- ❖ **Ability to assist other Fire Departments with** mutual aid & share training



Threats

What are the biggest threats to your Fire Department today?

- ❖ **Regionalization:** Four departments felt regionalization could be a threat. Identified is the following reason centralizing fire resources creates holes and makes districts too large; “if done badly”
- ❖ **Liability/lawsuits:** Three departments had concerns regarding potential liability because Fire Fighters are undertrained, and under-protected because of insufficient/non-certified fire trucks
- ❖ **Retention of Fire Fighters:** Seven departments were concerned about retention
- ❖ **Regional Emergency Services Coordinator Position:** One department had the following comment “Regional Emergency Services Coordinator not as functional or helpful as position could be;” aligned too closely with Flagstaff County
- ❖ **Aging apparatus, equipment and/or Fire hall:** Three departments were concerned about aging apparatus and /or the state of the Fire hall
- ❖ **Shrinking population of Municipality:** One department expressed concerns about shrinking population
- ❖ **Unstable or unclear funding/political support:** Two departments felt there was unclear funding and political support from elected leadership
- ❖ **Volunteers unavailable:** One department was concerned about availability of volunteers
- ❖ **Training availability:** One department was concerned about availability and access to training

SWOT ANALYSIS

Municipal Emergency Management, all municipalities within and including Flagstaff County:

Strengths

Emergency Management strengths determined by the interview of municipalities

- ❖ A reasonable understanding of the importance of emergency management
 - ❖ Support from elected officials to update Municipal Emergency Management Plans
 - ❖ Strong support from elected officials for a regional approach to emergency management
 - ❖ Strong support from administrative staff, CAO's, Director of Emergency Management for a regional approach to emergency management
 - ❖ Municipalities have a reasonable understanding of the importance of emergency management and how it pertains at the local and regional level
- ❖ Support from elected officials to receive training and pursue additional training in emergency management for the elected official, administration and First Responders
 - ❖ Total support from all interviewed on the benefits of developing and adopting a Regional Emergency Management Plan
 - ❖ Support from CAOs, administrative Staff and Directors of Emergency Management for additional training for all involved in emergency management

Weaknesses

Emergency Management weaknesses determined by the interview of municipalities

- ❖ A need to better manage the plan updates and ensure that Elected Officials and staff receive more timely training
- ❖ There was a general lack of confidence in the skills of the elected officials, CAO's and Directors of Emergency Management with regards to the ability to handle an event
- ❖ A need for the Provincial Government to provide more training
- ❖ Do not fully understand the requirements of the Emergency Management Act
- ❖ Do not fully understand their accountability to their citizens under the Emergency Management Act

Opportunities

Emergency Management opportunities determined by the interview of Municipalities

- ❖ A region wide understanding and agreement that emergency management is a area of concern and consensus to look at a regional approach in the area
- ❖ Existing Regional Emergency Services Committee that could easily evolve into a more proactive and reactive entity to address emergency management shortfalls and concerns. With the further development of Terms of Reference, this Committee could ensure continuity and sustainability through leadership and a sound regional governance framework
- ❖ Development of a regional framework for emergency management could create opportunities for training and sharing of knowledge in the preparedness phase and a quicker, more integrated approach in the response phase
- ❖ Development of a regional approach (based on the reality and capability of each individual Municipality)

to emergency management which will improve response and safety for all citizens within the region

- ❖ Reduction and mitigation of legal liabilities should occur with a regional approach to emergency management
- ❖ Positive public relations and improved profile with the public and the province with proactive steps taken to regionalize emergency management



Threats

Emergency Management threats determined during interview of municipalities

- ❖ Lack of training by and for elected and municipal officials
- ❖ Legal and moral liability to the municipalities and elected officials if the response to an incident is poor or improperly executed
- ❖ Concern about existing knowledge gaps regarding emergency management and a lack of resilience and/or secession planning within the municipalities to deal with an extended incident
- ❖ Fear of the unknown and the fact that an “event” could happen at any time, and whether the municipality will be found unable to respond to the problem with adequate resources and trained personnel
- ❖ Inability to find people interested in, or having the time, to take on the roles and responsibilities of Director of Emergency Management (and other key positions) and

willing to undertake the responsibility for training, updating the plan and exercising the community.

- ❖ Fear of failure in meeting existing legislation (Emergency Management Act, Municipal Government Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, etc.)
- ❖ That this opportunity for addressing gaps and weaknesses will not proceed and that “Status Quo” will remain

Expectation, Reality, Outcome Review

In this review the consultants identify expectations from many different stakeholders in the community and these expectations are listed in the first column. The second column responds with the reality to the expectation. The third column identifies the likely outcome of the expectation. The first table reviews the fire service expectations, realities and outcomes. The second table focuses on emergency management. The intent of the review is to provoke discussion and thought as it puts on paper what should be issues that require dialogue and hopefully action. Whether a municipality faces these challenges is a matter in which each elected and appointed official must determine for themselves as an entity. You can easily add additional comments to each box to expand the issues and identify additional issues. The intent here was to touch on some core challenges that should be considered.



Expectation, Reality and Outcome Analysis for Fire Protection

Expectation Fire Protection	Reality Fire Protection	Outcome Fire Protection
Public believes that they will be protected at all times regardless of the incident	Municipalities do not have limitless resources to protect the public at all times	Municipality responds with what resources it has to an incident
Public believes that all Fire Fighters are highly trained	Training levels are variable from nonexistent to highly trained	More consistent training and record keeping is required to ensure forward advancement of the department
Public believes that a full contingent of Fire Fighters are available 24/7	There are gaps in coverage that leave the municipality vulnerable	A automatic dual response will reduce gaps and vulnerability
Fire Departments believe they report directly to Council some believe they don't report to Council	Fire Departments are a municipal department and report to the CAO	All municipal departments report to the CAO and the CAO is accountable to Council
Fire Departments believe they should receive more equipment	Councils have many funding requests from all departments and special interest groups	A ten year capital plan will help municipalities budget expenditures for fire depts.
Council wants good value for money invested in capital intensive equipment	In some cases equipment is underutilized because of lack of training and consistent exercising	A training program ensuring that all equipment and resources are used to their full potential.
Fire Departments want very good quality, or similar equipment to other halls	Not all Fire Departments require the same equipment, due to call volumes/types of calls/level of training	Purchase equipment that best suits capabilities of volunteers, and response types and volumes
County Council want good value for money invested in capital intensive equipment	In some cases equipment is underutilized because it doesn't match call volume and type of call	A deployment program ensuring that appropriate equipment and resources are used to their full potential

Expectation, Reality and Outcome Analysis for Emergency Management

Expectation For Emergency Management	Reality For Emergency Management	Outcome For Emergency Management
Public believes that they will be protected at all times regardless of the incident	Municipalities do not have limitless resources to protect the public at all times	Municipality responds with what resources it has to an incident
Public believes that all municipal officials and staff are highly trained and capable of handling an event	Training levels are variable from nonexistent to moderately trained	More consistent training and record keeping is required to ensure forward advancement of the municipalities
Public believes that full protection and response is available 24/7	There are gaps in coverage that leave the municipality vulnerable	A regional response plan for emergency management will reduce gaps and vulnerability
Council believes their liability is minimal	Legislatively Council is liable for all actions or in actions taken by a Municipality	More education and training is required for all elected officials including refresher courses
Rural municipalities tend to believe that emergency response is more an urban responsibility	All Municipalities are responsible to their citizens to develop an Emergency Response Plan and are held accountable	A Regional Emergency Management Plan will improve education and reduce liability through proper response to a disaster event

Budget for the Regional Emergency Advisory

Committee

On the following pages is an annual financial budget of what the potential expenses are for the creation of a funding program to implement the recommendations of the report. This budget is for the regional positions only; it does not provide financial support for municipal fire department operations. All of the recommendations hinge on the decision to increase staff. The present situation finds one individual, the Regional Emergency Services Coordinator, with no administrative support attempting to move the regional concept ahead. The creation of this position was a good first step. The budget is based on the need for intellectual effort to create policies, plans, bylaws, training programs, as well as requiring political will and senior administrative support to move ahead. This budget is a

suggestion for funding and potential cost allocation. Final municipal allocations rest with the elected officials. This is a budget based on two steps;

Step 1: Creation of a Regional Fire Chief and part time Administrative Assistant

Step 2: Creation of an additional Regional Emergency Management/Training Coordinator

There are other options with regards to Step 2. You could find a volunteer in the region willing to take on all Regional Emergency Management coordination relying heavily on administrative support. Maybe a municipal staff member who has an interest, or a retired individual with a military, law enforcement or fire fighter background. Another option would be to add the emergency management duties to the Regional Fire Chief but you would have to increase administrative support position to fulltime hours.

Funding Formula for Regional Emergency Advisory Committee

Staffing level Regional Fire Chief and Part time Administrative support

Municipality	Population	Per Capita Funding	Municipal Funding Support
Flagstaff County	Subsidy		\$ 78,000.00
Flagstaff County	3506	\$ 8.79	\$ 30,806.35
Town of Daysland	818	\$ 8.79	\$ 7,187.56
Town of Hardisty	761	\$ 8.79	\$ 6,686.72
Town of Killam	1019	\$ 8.79	\$ 8,953.70
Town of Sedgewick	891	\$ 8.79	\$ 7,829.00
Village of Alliance	197	\$ 8.79	\$ 1,730.99
Village of Forrestsburg	895	\$ 8.79	\$ 7,864.14
Village of Galahad	134	\$ 8.79	\$ 1,177.42
Village of Heisler	150	\$ 8.79	\$ 1,318.01
Village of Lougheed	254	\$ 8.79	\$ 2,231.84
Village of Strome	252	\$ 8.79	\$ 2,214.26
Total Population	8877		
Expenses			
Personnel			
Regional Emergency Fire Coordinator			\$ 75,000.00
.5 Part Time Admin. Support			\$ 30,000.00
Benefits			\$ 42,000.00
Total Salary and Benefits			\$ 147,000.00
Vehicles			\$ 6,000.00
Office Space and Supplies			\$ 3,000.00
Total Budget			\$ 156,000.00
Flagstaff County Subsidy of 50%			\$ 78,000.00
Outstanding Balance			\$ 78,000.00
Total Population of all Municipalities in Flagstaff County			8,877
Per capita cost for Regional Emergency Services Committee			\$ 8.79

Funding Formula for Regional Emergency Advisory Committee

Staffing Level

Regional Fire Chief, Regional Emergency Management Coordinator, Admin Support

Municipality	Population	Per Capita Funding	Municipal Funding Support
Flagstaff County	Subsidy		\$ 113,000.00
Flagstaff County	3506	\$ 12.73	\$ 44,629.72
Town of Daysland	818	\$ 12.73	\$ 10,412.75
Town of Hardisty	761	\$ 12.73	\$ 9,687.17
Town of Killam	1019	\$ 12.73	\$ 12,971.39
Town of Sedgewick	891	\$ 12.73	\$ 11,342.01
Village of Alliance	197	\$ 12.73	\$ 2,507.72
Village of Forrestburg	895	\$ 12.73	\$ 11,392.93
Village of Galahad	134	\$ 12.73	\$ 1,705.76
Village of Heisler	150	\$ 12.73	\$ 1,909.43
Village of Lougheed	254	\$ 12.73	\$ 3,233.30
Village of Strome	252	\$ 12.73	\$ 3,207.84
Total Population	8877		
Expenses			
Personnel			
Regional Fire Chief			\$ 75,000.00
Regional Emergency Management Coordinator			\$ 65,000.00
.5 Part Time Admin. Support			\$ 30,000.00
Benefits			\$ 42,000.00
Total Salary and Benefits			\$ 212,000.00
Vehicles			\$ 10,000.00
Office Space and Supplies			\$ 4,000.00
Total Expenses			\$ 226,000.00
Flagstaff County Subsidy of 50%			\$ 113,000.00
Outstanding Balance			\$ 113,000.00
Total Population of all Municipalities in Flagstaff County			8,877
Per capita cost for Regional Emergency Services Committee			\$ 12.73

Conclusion

The Consultants would like to thank all of the participants in this study. Many hours were invested by many individuals to supply us with the needed information to produce this document. It takes community minded people to make Municipal Government work; it's the level of Government closest to the people. Because it is the closest to the people, it is the most rewarding Government to participate in, because you are making decisions that directly affect the welfare of family, friends and neighbors.

After considerable research and review this report has outlined several recommendations for consideration by the elected officials of all the Municipalities within Flagstaff County. The decision making process from the policy makers is going to focus on need, value for the tax dollar, and measureable

deliverables. In order for any major change in policy direction to be successful, it must also be sustainable. In order for sustainability of a new policy and therefore success, it requires three key components.

- Political will and support of elected officials to make the appropriate policy decision
- Administrative support of senior management staff of all municipalities
- Financial support of all participating municipalities

A lack of support or no support of any one of the aforementioned points will cause the policy to weaken and therefore become unsustainable for any length of time. The future direction of fire protection and emergency management is clear; the next step is up to the municipalities.

Thank you and Good Luck

Fire/Emergency Management Questionnaire

Occupational Health and Safety Code of Practice for Firefighters

Emergency Management Act



Fire/Emergency Management Questionnaire

The following questions were directed to Municipal Council member(s), the CAO and the Director of Emergency Management (where available) during our interview process. The results and answers of these 11 municipal questionnaires have been condensed as follows:

1. Is Council aware of its statutory powers and obligations under the Emergency Management Act?

With the recent municipal elections, there are a significant number of Councillors who have not had training in their roles and responsibilities. Dieter Langer of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency can provide this official training (Basic Emergency Management for elected officials). Further training for elected officials should be provided in the form of municipal and/or regional disaster exercises.

2. Has Council appointed an Emergency Advisory Committee (formerly referred to as the Disaster Services or Emergency Management Committee) as of the most recent organizational meeting? If yes, list Committee members:

Eight of 11 municipalities have appointed an Emergency Advisory Committee. Note:

Terminology is not consistent. In accordance with the current Emergency Management Act, the committee of council is now referred to as the Emergency Advisory Committee. References to Disaster Services Committee and/or Emergency Management Committee should be deleted.

3. Has Council appointed a Director of the Emergency Management Agency (Director of Emergency Management)? If yes, list DEM:

Ten of 11 municipalities have an appointed DEM. The one Municipality who does not have a DEM has been actively recruiting, with no luck. Note: In almost all cases, the DEM has dual or more roles; CAOs, Councillor, Fire Chief, etc. In a perfect world, the DEM would not have Council, Administration or First Response duties.

4. Has Council appointed Deputy Director(s) of Emergency Management? Although not stipulated in the Emergency Management Act, it is highly recommended to have at least one Deputy Director to ensure continuity:

Seven of 11 municipalities have appointed at least one Deputy DEM. Galahad, Killam, Sedgewick and Strome do not currently have a Deputy DEM. Heisler and Lougheed have 2 Deputy DEMs appointed.

5. Does the Municipality have an Emergency Management (Disaster Services) Bylaw? If yes, please provide a copy.

Ten of 11 municipalities have a Bylaw. Killam is in the process of drafting a new Emergency Management Bylaw.

6. Is the Bylaw current?

With the exceptions of two municipalities, all other Municipal Bylaws are out of date.

7. Does the Municipality have a Municipal Emergency Plan?

11 municipalities have a Municipal Emergency Plan in place.

8. Is the Municipal Emergency Plan current and up to date?

Generally speaking, all 11 Municipal Emergency Plans are in need of amendment or upgrading.

9. What is the date of the last amendment to the plan?

See above. Note: Generally speaking, all Municipal Emergency Plans are based on the 1995 MEP Template provided by Alberta Disaster Services (now called the Alberta Emergency Management Agency).

10. Does the Municipality have an Emergency Operations Centre designated?

All 11 municipalities have a designated EOC.

11. What is the location of the Emergency Operations Centre?

Eight of 11 municipalities have located their EOC in the Municipal Office and typically, in Council Chambers. Heisler and Lougheed have their EOCs in their Fire Halls. Strome's EOC is in their Community Hall.

12. Does the Emergency Operations Centre have sufficient telecommunications capability (phone, fax, email, radio, etc.)?

All 11 municipalities have phone and fax capabilities. Internet connectivity was available in most EOCs (Lougheed and Strome excepted). Radio systems were not available in the majority of EOCs (low cost solution would be having portable radios in the EOC).

13. Is there an alternate Emergency Operations Centre designated within the municipality?

Four of 11 municipalities did not have a designated alternate EOC.

14. In the event of an evacuation of the municipality (for whatever reason), where would the municipality

establish an alternate Emergency Operations Centre?
Is/are there any agreements in place for the sharing of Emergency Operations Centre(s)?

Only three municipalities indicated that they had an alternative EOC outside of their municipality to evacuate to in the event of major evacuation.

15. Has the Municipal Emergency Operations Centre been activated in the past five years? The past ten years? Ever?

Only Flagstaff County indicated that their EOC had been activated in recent history. The activation was in response to major wind event in 2009.

16. Are there any mutual aid agreements (other than fire) in place with surrounding Municipalities? If yes, please provide copies.

Only Alliance, Forestburg and Galahad indicated that there are formal agreements in place for disaster services/emergency management purposes.

17. Has the Municipality exercised the Municipal Emergency Plan? If so, when was the last exercise (tabletop, functional or full-scale field) held?

Only one municipality indicated that they have not conducted an exercise. The remaining

municipalities have conducted exercises within the past five years.

18. Has the Alberta Emergency Management Agency provided training opportunities for the municipality?

All 11 municipalities indicated that AEMA has provided training opportunities.

19. Has the Municipality taken advantage of provincial or federal grants for emergency management (AEMA training, Federal JEPP grants, etc.)?

Most municipalities were aware that there are Provincial and Federal grants available. Dieter Langer and Don Rosland of AEMA are the contact points for any questions on provincial and federal funding for emergency management and fire services.

20. Is the Municipality aware that the Province has adopted the Incident Command System (ICS) as a replacement for the Emergency Site Management System?

The 11 municipalities were split down the middle on ICS. Some were aware of ICS and some had never heard of it.

21. Is the Municipality interested in adopting the Incident Command System in the future?

The majority of the municipalities were interested in ICS; however, some were concerned about delivery and funding for the training. Note: If the municipalities are interested in a regional approach to emergency management, ICS might be a major complicating factor in going forwards as it has not been redeveloped for use by municipalities as of yet.

22. Is the Municipality in favour of moving towards a regional approach to emergency management?

All 11 municipalities are in favour.

23. Is the Municipality interested in participating in a Regional Emergency Management Plan?

All 11 municipalities are interested.

24. If yes, would the Municipality participate in a Regional Emergency Management Agency?

All 11 municipalities indicated that they would participate in a Regional Emergency Management Agency; however, it was pointed out that Terms of Reference should be established up front. In addition, the need for a Partnership Agreement and updated Emergency Management Bylaws for each municipality was identified as possible ways forward.

25. Further, would the Municipality participate by providing a member (and alternate) of the Emergency Advisory Committee to sit as a member on a Regional Emergency Advisory Committee?

All 11 municipalities indicated that they would participate in a Regional Emergency Advisory Committee (recognizing that the Regional Emergency Service Committee is already in place and would be a suitable structure to build on); however, it was pointed out that Terms of Reference should be established up front.

26. Does the Municipality support the concept of a combined Regional Emergency Management and Fire Services organization?

The majority of the municipalities were in support of a Regional Emergency Management and Fire Services organization in principle. Forestburg felt it might be too early and others felt that it might be a logical long term goal.

27. Are there any models of regionalization that you are aware of and would support?

Four of 11 municipalities were aware of the Beaver Emergency Services Commission. Lougheed and Hardisty were aware of other models such as Lacombe Regional, Camrose Regional and Mountain View Regional efforts.

28. What is the perceived/real reputation of the Fire Department in your community?

Nine out of ten municipalities perceived that their Fire Departments had an average to excellent reputation within their communities.

29. Does the Fire Department respect the democratic process and the decisions of Council?

Generally, most Municipalities felt that their Fire Department respected the democratic process and decisions of Council. The Municipalities that indicated that there were problems, had issues in making the Fire Departments understand Councils' roles and responsibilities in terms of liability and budgeting. Note: Communication between the Fire Chiefs/Departments, Administration and Councils needs to be improved across the Region. Further, a clearly defined "chain-of-command" reporting structure needs to be implemented.

30. What is the working relationship between the Fire Department and other municipal administration staff?

Of the ten municipalities queried, the answers ranged from weak and testy, all the way up to excellent. The comments and note in question 29 are applicable to this question.

31. Is the Fire Department an open organization or a closed private club?

Nine out of ten municipalities said that their Fire Department was an open organization. The one Municipality who indicated that their Fire Department was a closed private club said the situation is gradually improving.

32. Do you feel that the Fire Department is offering the best service possible given its level of equipment and training?

All 11 municipalities felt that the 10 Fire Departments are offering the best service possible. Several indicated that training needs to be improved.

33. Do you feel the Fire Department is receiving adequate financial resources?

Nine out of ten municipalities feel that their Fire Department is receiving adequate financial resources from their municipality. One Municipality indicated that there should be more funds available for equipment and honorariums. Note: This question needs to be taken in the context of each individual municipality funding their own Fire Department. It does not take into account funding from outside sources (County, Alberta Transportation, Alberta Health Services – EMS, etc.).

34. Is there administrative and political support to provide additional resources to the Fire Department?

All 11 municipalities indicated that there would be administrative and political support for providing additional resources to their Fire Departments, dependent on a demonstrated need.

35. Does the Fire Chief work well with the volunteers?

Generally, the respondents felt that their Fire Chiefs work well with their volunteers. There are some instances where relationships are potentially rocky.

36. Is the Fire Chief respected by the volunteers, community, and other Chiefs?

Nine of ten Fire Chiefs are generally respected by all. One Municipality is experiencing some difficulties; however, they are working to improve relations.

37. Does Council need or want a strong Fire Department?

Yes, across all 11 municipalities.

38. What is the annual budget of the Fire Department?

Budgets ranged from a low of \$20,000 to a high of \$71,000 (operating). Capital budgeting ranged from zero to \$14,300.00.

39. What are the funding sources?

Funding sources amongst the 11 municipalities include: Municipal taxation, County funding, Alberta Transportation, MSI, Donations and Fundraising by Fire Departments.

40. Does the Fire Department undertake any independent fundraising from the public and private corporations?

Nine out of ten Fire Departments undertake independent fundraising.

41. What is the percentage of the annual budget allocated to the Fire Department?

The ten municipalities with Fire Departments ranged from a low of 1%, to a high of 13% of their annual operating budget.

42. Does the Municipality offer fire protection services to another municipality?

All ten municipalities provide fire protection to Flagstaff County within their respective Fire Districts. Hardisty has fee-for-service agreements with MD of Provost, MD of Wainwright and Paintearth County.

43. Is there a funding agreement in place?

A one-year extension is currently in place with Flagstaff County and the ten municipalities. This extension expires at the end of December 2011.

44. Does this agreement meet the operational expenses of the Fire Department when on an active fire call?

Three of the municipalities stated that the agreement meets their operational expenses. Three municipalities said that it did not. The remaining four municipalities were somewhere between yes and no; with one being adamant on a fair funding formula.

45. Do you think your Municipality is subsidizing another municipality with your Fire Department?

Seven of the municipalities indicated a yes. Two municipalities indicated a no. The remaining municipality indicated a no; however pointed out that there are shortfalls with regards to a second apparatus being deployed.

46. How is your working relationship with the senior administration of the other municipalities?

Generally, relations amongst the municipalities' administrations are good. One municipality indicated they felt that relations are strained with several other municipalities, mostly due to stands that they have taken with regards to fire services.

47. Does your Council work well with the other elected Councils of other municipalities?

Relations amongst the Councils are generally good. As one Municipality pointed out, there will always be disagreements; however, all recognize the importance of working together to come up with viable solutions to issues.

48. If the working relationship is not good between Councils, is there a common area of concern, i.e. fire service in which both Councils will overlook their differences?

Fire Services and Emergency Management concerns were given by numerous municipalities.

49. Are you concerned about 24/7/365 fire coverage?

Most municipalities had some concerns with fire coverage. Having said that, all polled were aware of the usual limitations imposed on their Fire Departments.

50. Are there known gaps in fire protection coverage that occur during specific time of day/week/month/year?

Typical gaps in fire protection revolve around summer, weekends, holidays, hunting season, etc.

51. Is the public aware of potential gaps in the fire protection coverage?

No indication from any of the municipalities as to their residents being aware of gaps in fire protection.

52. Has the public ever raised questions regarding fire protection?

No indication from any of the municipalities as to their residents raising questions or concerns on fire protection. The one exception was Daysland during their discussions with Flagstaff County on extending the Fire Agreement.

53. Has there ever been a legal action or attempted legal action against the Fire Department by a property owner or the property owner's insurance company?

All municipalities indicated that they had no knowledge of any legal action, attempted or otherwise, against the Fire Departments in their municipalities.

54. Would the citizens support a tax increase if that money was earmarked for fire department/emergency services use only?

Most municipalities said no, with the remainder indicating that they (through Council) would address this issue on a demonstrated need basis.

55. Has the community ever conducted a community survey of the residents to determine support for the Fire Department?

All municipalities indicated no.

56. Does the Fire Department hold an open house and invite the public into the fire hall?

Eight of ten Fire Departments hold open houses of some description. Two municipalities indicated that their Fire Department does not hold open houses.

57. Does the Fire Department have a public education mandate, visit schools, teach fire prevention, or a work experience program?

Eight of ten Fire Departments have a public education mandate and conduct school visits and attempt to further fire prevention. Two municipalities indicated that their Fire Department does not participate in public education.

58. Would Council support the involvement of the Fire Chief and volunteers in joint initiatives with other Fire Departments in the area?

All ten municipalities indicated that they would support joint Fire Chief and Fire Department initiatives (one of these ten municipalities indicated

“only if the Fire Department buys into joint initiatives”).

59. Is there one or more problem(s) that definitely needs to be resolved before any change can occur?

Eight of 11 municipalities indicated that there were no urgent problems on a go-forward basis. One Municipality indicated that a fair funding formula needs to be addressed first and foremost. One Municipality indicated that their Fire Department needs to commit to training. Another Municipality had an excellent comment that there needs to be “Flexibility amongst all the municipalities in listening to the issues and being capable of understanding the rationale and background for each municipality’s issues”.

60. What are three positives attributes of the present day Fire Department?

Positives mentioned by municipalities included: Love of job, training, fund raising, commitment, availability, youthfulness, dedication, communications, recruitment efforts, maintenance of equipment, quick response, professionalism, etc.

61. What are three weaknesses of the present day Fire Department?

Weaknesses mentioned included: Lack of consistent training, lack of communication, lack of understanding of democratic process, capital acquisition, recruitment and retention, bias to regionalization, funding, no SOGs, sustainability, etc.

62. Is there a Fire Department from another community of similar size which is operating in a fashion which you feel would be an excellent bench mark for your department?

Hardisty, Heisler, Killam and Mannville were mentioned.

63. Would you like a quick fix to problems or are you more interested in a long term solution?

With the exception of one Municipality, all were in favour of a staged, long term solution. The one exception was based on resolving funding issues prior to moving forward.

64. Are there any issues in either fire services or emergency management, not already mentioned that keep you up at night?

The majority of municipalities indicated that they are not comfortable with their current situation with regards to emergency management and the requirements of the Emergency Management Act.

65. Have we missed anything? Last thoughts?

One Councillor mentioned that a Regional Committee of Councillors and a Regional Emergency Management Agency would be a great umbrella organization to address Occupational Health and Safety, protective services, fire and emergency management issues.

There were no other comments received during the interviews, or by email to date.