

OVERVIEW OF THE 2009 STAKEHOLDER SUMMIT

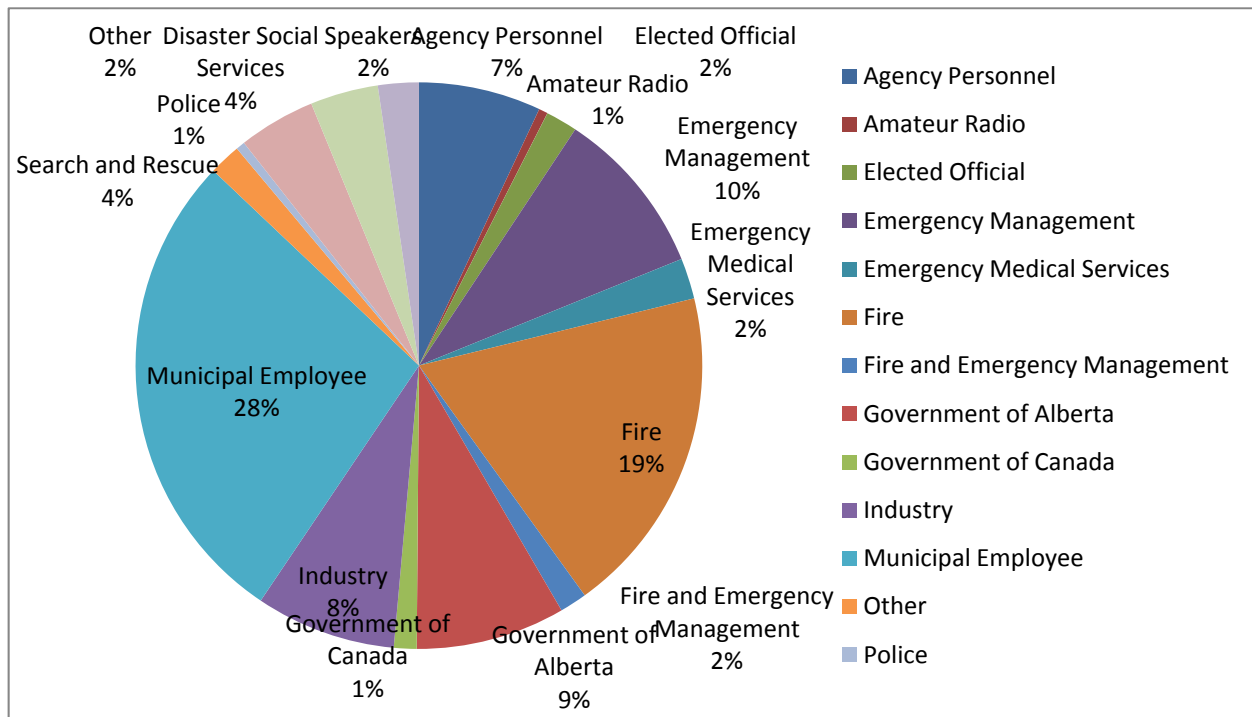
The 2009 Stakeholder Summit (the Summit), sponsored by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (the Agency) was attended over 300 personnel (approximately 30% more than the 2008 Summit) from across the spectrum of Emergency Management Professionals. The Summit was conducted with the assistance of nine facilitators, spanned a two-day period and cost approximately \$46,000 to host.

Prior to the Summit, a steering committee of external experts was established and tasked to determine six areas (streams of discussion) of main concern for all members of the Alberta Emergency Management System as follows:

- a. Recovery;
- b. Major Emergencies;
- c. Education and Training;
- d. Incident Command System (ICS);
- e. Emergency Dispatch; and
- f. Health Emergencies.

Conference attendees chose the stream which most concerned them, and participated in a structured, facilitated discussion intended to reduce the broad array of concerns down to concrete achievable objectives. These objectives were written down and turned in to the facilitators. By this process, and through the excellent collaborative efforts of all involved, a pre-conference list of over 300 concerns was condensed and categorized into a series of objectives falling within the scope of the six schemes discussed above.

Conference attendees represented the various emergency management sectors as follows:



This report contains a brief summary of the objectives developed by attendees of the Stakeholder Summit, categorized by where they came in under the six main streams of discussion. Objectives that were very similar have been combined and common themes have been condensed. References to who should perform a particular task have been left in only where the attendees were very clear on who they felt should perform a task- there is no assumption that the tasks below are exclusively for the Agency to perform. It should also be noted that these objectives are desired objectives, and not firm commitments to the accomplishment of these goals in the short term, as many are longer-term goals that will take time to come to fruition.

In very rare cases, objectives which were scant or incomplete have been omitted from this report.

Recovery:

This stream of discussion was the least attended of the 6 streams. Attendees were from Non-Governmental Organizations and Disaster Social Services.

The attendees developed two main objectives for Recovery.

1. Establish a working group to address identified gaps and incorporate solutions into an inclusive, workable definition of recovery that is agreed upon and supported by formal processes such as legislation or regulation.
2. Led by the Agency, determine recovery roles and responsibilities for all partners, reinforcing that response and recovery are a continuum.

Major Emergencies:

The Major Emergencies stream attracted the largest attendance, and revealed a willingness to work together by all partners. This was hampered, however, by a lack of foundations on which to proceed. Participants in this stream developed eight objectives:

The most commonly voiced objective with respect to Major Emergencies centered on bolstering the province's mutual aid system and regionalizing planning for major events:

1. After examining existing mutual aid groups, formal, logical and sustainable mutual aid regions should be established, with accompanying policies and guidelines. Partners within these regions should then conduct co-operative training resulting in better procedural coordination, expanded resource bases, augmented equipment lists, and cross-pollination of experience.

Three objectives would support this work. They provide ancillary supplemental objectives related to increased cooperation.

2. Employing state of the art communications technology, the Agency should create a central repository, including templates, examples and lessons-learned for communication tools to deliver timely, accurate, concise and consistent messages to the public.
3. By creating a provincial volunteer management system, including performance reviews, coaching and feedback tools, the province should create a fully staffed volunteer system to meet the needs of system partners, increase interest from volunteer groups and reduce turnover.
4. By establishing a framework committee and developing a resource tracking system, the province should develop a capability to activate a regional/provincial emergency response in order to provide assistance for massive and catastrophic emergencies in communities. This framework and system will also make individual communities within Alberta better equipped to respond effectively to a major catastrophe with the needed resources through a valid and recognized process.

Two objectives were also developed relating to increased Agency support in training.

5. The province should provide more funding to small municipalities for training both paid staff and volunteers, including compensation for lost wages, with the aim of having more fully trained staff and volunteers to facilitate better preparedness.
6. By developing and leading exercises and mock scenarios that test our preparedness, the Agency should provide training leadership and expertise to ensure community preparedness and to bolster confidence that communities can effectively and successfully implement their MEMP.

There were also two miscellaneous objectives. One concerned preparation for public events and one referred to business resumption planning across the system.

7. By educating public officials and developing permit processes, communities would conduct safe public events.
8. Business Continuity planning and execution at the community level should be enhanced by the identification of subject matter experts, redundant staff and redundant equipment available from mutual aid partners. Essential services should be prioritized in order to ensure timely restoration after any business interruption.

Education and Training:

This stream attracted the second largest group of attendees. They all indicated an eagerness to train together, but an inability to increase their respective organizational training burdens due to budget and personnel shortages.

Participants in this stream developed five objectives:

Initially, service standards will be required.

1. Through provincial legislation, community consultation and third party assessment, municipalities should acknowledge and enforce minimum standards for education (accreditation, certification, etc.) and training (continuation training standards, exercise requirements, etc.).

Current instructor resources are considered to be under-staffed and not accessible between system partners.

2. A province-wide system of accessible, qualified instructors should be developed, teaching both discipline-specific and interdisciplinary material. These instructors may come from diverse agencies and backgrounds, but individual trainers must be certified, and training organizations accredited, to the same standards.

Personnel and organizations, once trained, will require periodic recertification.

3. A governing body should be formed to establish provincial standards for each discipline, including minimum standards and benchmarks for recertification in order to ensure pan-provincial consistency in capabilities of first responders, first responder teams, and emergency management organizations.

The five disciplines require on-going tools to continue to work together.

4. The Agency should introduce communications tools, including newsletters, databases, and mutual aid agreements, between all five disciplines, and implement multi-jurisdictional ICS training based on a common standard. This will improve communication between the five disciplines and enable them to effectively and efficiently work and train together.

As their last objective, the group identified a need for role-specific training in documentation and administrative support to emergencies.

5. Administrative personnel should be provided with training in ICS, EOCs and Site Management, to ensure familiarity with their tasks during an incident and accurate record keeping.

Incident Command System (ICS):

The use of ICS is inconsistent across the Alberta Emergency Management System, but there is universal interest in ICS. Most attendees stated unequivocally that they expect the Agency to mandate the use of ICS in Alberta.

Attendees developed strategies to address two objectives

1. The Agency will seek pan-provincial consensus on this issue, and communicate the incentive for and the intent to, convert to ICS. Provincial regulatory bodies and departments should mandate the use of ICS with the goal that all provincial system partners will use ICS within three years. This will be followed up with funding-based enforcement, in conjunction with educational tools for learners, trainers and decision makers.
2. The on-going support to municipalities and other partners will include specific information for municipalities, the interaction between the EOC and the site command, and a provincial timeline for pilot programs, provincial roll-out of ICS, recertification and audits.

Emergency Dispatch:

This discussion was challenged by the lack of Summit attendance from the Health sector due to the H1N1 pandemic, however:

The attendees developed two objectives:

1. Based on recommendations from EMS, Fire, Police and Public Safety dispatch professionals, a provincial initiative should be established to provide standards for all emergency management dispatch, including a common addressing system across the province and electronic sharing of information in real-time. This should be supported and enforced by legislation.
2. Assuming EMS calls are handled at the provincial level; a provincial dispatch working group should be established, with a goal to increase efficiency and coordination.

Health Emergencies:

This stream discussion took place during the H1N1 pandemic, at a time when Health sector communication and roles and responsibilities during health emergencies was a day to day concern for all attendees.

Attendees were able to agree on two objectives in the Health Emergencies stream. One objective addresses the role of the Agency in health emergencies; the other addresses the flow of information from the health sector to the Emergency Management System and to the public. Due to the H1N1 pandemic, no attendees from the Health sector took part in this discussion.

1. The Agency, in cooperation with key stakeholders, should take on a clearly defined role in the development, evaluation and readiness of a pan-provincial health emergency plan, including a transparent lessons-learned process.
2. To ensure that the public and stakeholders receive and understand health emergency messaging in a clear, reliable and accessible way, a communications plan should be developed which links federal , provincial, municipal, industrial and other stakeholders (including the general public), and which establishes public health authorities as the experts in the minds of the public and reinforces good personal hygiene procedures. This will have the effect of reducing emergency room visits, improving the standard and consistency of care, and bolstering public confidence in the system.

The Agency would like to thank all those who attended the 2009 Stakeholder Summit and who provided such excellent input, enthusiasm and cooperative effort- all geared towards continuing to build upon the excellent foundation Alberta already has for managing emergencies within the province. The next Stakeholders Summit will be held November 9th to 10th, 2010 at the West Edmonton Conference Centre. The theme for this summit will be along the lines of discussing emergency management in Alberta as a "System of Systems," and will include more guest speakers than the 2009 Summit.