



The Other Side of the Yellow Tape: An Analysis of ESS Learning Event Data from the 2013 Southern Alberta Floods

November 2014



The Other Side of the Yellow Tape

An Analysis of ESS Learning Event Data from the 2013 Southern Alberta Floods

Scott Cameron, Manager
Social Planning Department
The City of Red Deer
Red Deer, Alberta, Canada

Dr. Tim Haney, Ph. D.
Associate Professor of Sociology
Founding Director, Center for Community Disaster Research
Mount Royal University
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Acknowledgments

The delivery of Emergency Social Services (ESS) in Alberta is a collaborative endeavor. During the devastating flood events, ESS practitioners from across the province worked together to support Albertans in their time of need. The authors of this paper acknowledge the collective efforts of community members, municipal and provincial officials, and human service organizations that came to the aid of people in need. These efforts have created a level of expertise worthy of examination and analysis.

Thank you to the ESSNA Learning Event working group that helped to create the space necessary for gathering information and knowledge:

- Varley Weisman, Medicine Hat
- Bonnie Stearns, Red Deer
- Shelley Koots, High River
- Alison Garritts, Banff
- Clay Aragon, Airdrie
- Debbie Posey, Okotoks
- Brenda Caston, Canmore

Special thanks to the Emergency Social Services Network of Alberta (ESSNA) – a dedicated group of ESS leaders committed to improving the delivery of ESS in the province. Much of the work performed by this group is done “on the corner of their desks”, and truly makes a difference in the lives of Albertans during times of need.

Template design: Nine10, Grande Prairie
Layout: Chayla Van Koughnett, Red Deer

Introduction to ESSNA

The Emergency Social Services Network of Alberta (ESSNA) is a voluntary group of Emergency Social Services (ESS) representatives from Alberta municipalities that meet to exchange knowledge and resources to enhance reception centre and emergency social services in the province. ESSNA seeks to deliver annual learning events as a means of building and maintaining positive working relationships among ESS stakeholders.

The ESSNA group was formed in the early 2000s and has been largely comprised of representatives from Alberta's major centres. Over the past several years, ESSNA has been working collaboratively to increase opportunities for local communities of all sizes, and to promote the importance of ESS as a significant component of local emergency management planning.

In 2011, as a result of the wildfires in Slave Lake and northern Alberta, neighbouring villages, towns and cities were called upon to provide reception centre supports for evacuees. Members of ESSNA were engaged by the Province of Alberta to mobilize ESS and reception centre supports in a number of communities. The pre-existing relationships among ESS members and staff employed through local Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) helped to support communications efforts between reception centres across northern Alberta. Following the 2011 wildfires, KPMG published a report which highlights seven themes including Evacuee Support and Interim Accommodations (KPMG, 2012), and provides a significant point of reference for future improvements to ESS delivery in Alberta.

In 2013, Alberta experienced a second devastating disaster - this time it happened in southern Alberta and instead of fires, multiple communities were impacted by unprecedented flooding. ESSNA members were once again sought out to provide local supports across municipalities managing reception centres for flood evacuees. Driven by its mandate to share knowledge and resources, and to develop and maintain positive working relationships among ESS stakeholders and organizations, a working group was established to bring ESS responders together for a learning event based on shared experiences.

Purpose of Learning Event

A working group was established among ESSNA members in December 2013 and included ESS stakeholders from flood impacted communities. This working group spent some 'upfront' time talking about the learning event goals and outcomes arriving at the following purpose:

Communities that activated their Emergency Social Services plans in response to the 2013 Southern Alberta floods have an opportunity to reflect on their experience, identify themes and shared learnings, and explore opportunities to improve systems associated with the activation.

Outcomes for the learning event included:

- a. increased knowledge of ESS practices,
- b. building stronger relationships among Alberta communities and the Province of Alberta,
- c. accessing information critical to building effective local ESS plans, and
- d. to hear from and validate the experiences of ESS personnel in the province.



Outputs from the learning event were to include a report containing data and recommendations from the event, and possibly a future ESS Charter to detail what ESS does and specifically articulate how it fits into local emergency management plans.

The result of these early efforts was the coordination of an ESSNA learning event entitled *Sharing Our Experience: Lessons Learned from the 2013 Southern Alberta Floods*. Using information from the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) website, invitations were sent to all 32 municipalities that had declared local states of emergency as a result of the 2013 flood events. In addition, invitations were sent to neighbouring communities that were not affected by the floods but provided facilities and resources to support reception centres and ESS activities due to the disaster, to the Province of Alberta's Human Services and AEMA departments, and Alberta's Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Council. The event was held in High River, Alberta on March 20-21, 2014 at the Highwood Golf and Country Club. Approximately 50 people participated in the two-day event representing 20 different municipalities, two provincial government departments, and Alberta's NGO Council.

The learning event was designed using an appreciative approach and largely structured to follow the Open Space Technology engagement and facilitation technique. The working group sought to design the event in a manner that would build on the positive aspects and learnings of the participants, and deliberately avoid processes that may incite anger or blame. Constructive criticism and solution-oriented activities were encouraged. The learning event was facilitated by Scott Cameron, Social Planning Manager with The City of Red Deer. To capture the data used in developing this report, participants were provided time after each discussion session to record their observations, key learnings and strategy suggestions using their mobile devices through a FluidSurveys online survey.

Upon completion of the two-day learning event, ESSNA contracted Dr. Tim Haney, Associate Professor of Sociology and Founding Director for the Centre for Community Disaster Research at Mount Royal University in Calgary to support the data analysis and interpretation. From a

research perspective, ESSNA acknowledges that limitations exist with the data collected as the learning event was not created using scientific research methods, but rather designed to represent the collective views and perspectives from ESS stakeholders engaged in the 2013 southern Alberta floods. ESSNA appreciates the interest shown by Dr. Haney in this topic, and his ability to apply sound research methodologies to appropriately analyze the quantitative and qualitative data collected.

Analysis of ESSNA Learning Event Data

Methodology

The 2013 Southern Alberta flood has been described as the worst in Alberta's history and is now considered the costliest disaster in Canadian history. Causing the displacement of more than 100,000 Albertans, the flood stressed many agencies and service providers beyond capacity. Within that context, the Emergency Social Services Network of Alberta (ESSNA) is a voluntary group of emergency social services representatives from Alberta municipalities and First Nations communities which aims to enhance social services provision in the context of emergencies in disasters.

On March 20 and 21, 2014, the Emergency Social Services Network of Alberta hosted a Learning Event in High River, Alberta, focused on identifying key learning outcomes of the 2013 Southern Alberta floods. This event brought together ESS staff from all over the province to discuss strengths, weaknesses, and areas to improve upon in future events.

Data were collected by engaging learning event participants to record key observations and insights using their mobile devices at the conclusion of each discussion round. Qualitative analysis took place through multiple steps by Dr. Timothy J. Haney, Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of Mount Royal University's Centre for Community Disaster Research. To the best of our knowledge, the following represents the only existing systematic analysis of data collected from Emergency

The Other Side of the Yellow Tape

Social Services personnel following a disaster. As such, it contains valuable reflections, criticisms, and suggestions which will hopefully aid ESSNA, various levels of government, NGO's, researchers, and communities prepare for future events.

To begin, the raw data was reviewed and categorized into several key concepts. Consistent with the learning event design, a number of successes were identified by participants. The discussions did, however, lead to a number of themed opportunities for improvement including:

1. Communication
2. Needs of Affected People
3. Defining Roles and Responsibilities
4. Training
5. Policy and Planning, and
6. Funding

Then, upon a second reading, the data was colour-coded so that it fit within one of those general concepts or themes. What resulted was a nuanced discussion of each theme, including recommendations that participants felt needed improvement following the 2013 flood.

Strengths and Successes

Based on the appreciative approach designed into the learning event, participants were acknowledged for their expertise gained by the 2013 flood experience, and encouraged to identify key actions and strategies that worked well. Participants identified a number of items that resulted in three key areas of success - adaptability, communication and the 'people-first' approach evident in ESS operations.

Adaptability:

Many participants noted that emergency social services staff adapted quickly to changing circumstances. As one noted, "We all were able to quickly change direction and make whatever happen that needed to happen." Beyond the success of ESS staff, however, several participants noted that the adaptability of municipalities and non-profits/ NGO's significantly helped for a better handling of the

event. As one participant noted "most communities jumped in to help where help was needed without formal contracts, agreements, etc." Another added that "Local and nationwide businesses stepped up to the plate to provide their support to affected communities and reception centers. [We saw] an out pouring of community support and companies doing their part to support as much as possible."

Communication:

Secondly, participants noted that communication between key stakeholders proceeded as well as could be expected given the circumstances. Interestingly, however, they did not point to the successes of current policies or the communications infrastructure. Rather, as pointed out above, they pointed to the ability of individuals on the ground to communicate effectively and (in some cases) to make wise, evidence-based decisions in lieu of outside communication. As one participant phrased it, "No communication (i.e., cell phone towers) did not hinder decision making - people made the decisions to do what needed to be done." That said, some participants did note the important role that social media took in the absence of these normal communication channels: "Facebook was a great place for residents to connect and have conversations when they did not trust the town."

People-First Approach:

Lastly, event participants noted that, by and large, ESS staff provided much-needed services to displaced persons during the flood. As one participant put it "ESS provided exceptional levels of service, professionalism and human compassion." Another remarked that the response in some municipalities, in particular, prioritized the needs of displaced residents. One remarked that things "Worked very well - Medicine Hat had buses with sunscreen, water - went with inspection team, provided mental health support, [and had] specific time frames for each area."

While it was important for participants in the learning event to remain positive and encouraged by their actions and response to the flood event, it was also necessary to mine their wisdom and insights to help improve ESS delivery in Alberta.

Areas for Increased Attention and Strategic Improvement

The format of the learning event was open whereby participants were able to determine the two-day agenda based on their individual and organizational perspectives. A total of twenty-nine (29) topics emerged from the agenda setting exercise on the first morning of the event, and were then distributed among four discussion sessions spread out over the balance of the learning event. Topic sponsors were permitted the opportunity to ‘blend’ their topic by agreement with other topic sponsors. The following six themes emerged as a result of the participant conversations with one another to form areas for strategic improvement.

Within each theme, the data submitted by learning event participants has been incorporated in a manner that highlights their key thoughts or observations. Following each themed conversation are a series of quick wins, short term and longer term suggestions from participants that were provided through the online survey. Where possible, the participants recorded who they felt may be in the best position to influence the suggested actions.

1. Communication

Probably the biggest lingering issue identified by event participants was that of communication. During a crisis

of any sort, the need for clear lines of communication between stakeholders increases at the very moment when those lines (cell, internet, etc.) are most strained. Broadly, this was probably the largest gap in the handling of the flood, as participants saw it. As one noted, “everything we discussed came back to communication. The importance of it, the lack of it. How it led to problems and issues that could have been dealt with in a timely fashion.” The failure to effectively communicate did not seem to occur within organizations, however, but between various stakeholders. As one participant put it there should be better communication related to “who our community partners are and defining everyone’s role.”

Participants talked about the need for better communication with several key stakeholders:

Communication with Emergency Operations Centre (EOC): First and foremost, participants mentioned that, in performing their duties related to emergency social services, there was often little in the way of communication with the Emergency Operations Centre. One reason for this could be that, as participants viewed it, the provincial and municipal governments often do not understand the role of emergency social service nor include ESS staff in key discussions. Many participants spoke about the need for ESS to have a seat at the provincial table for emergency planning (see section on policy and planning below). To this end, they stressed the importance of clear communication with the EOC, with one participant saying “ESS responders had challenges communicating with the EOC. Either because of technology failure or forgetting about the reception centre, many felt communication breakdown was a major issue.” Participants also frequently reflected upon how critically important this information would have been, saying things such as “communication between EOC and ESS is critical for being prepared, knowing what other decisions are being made and are going to impact us.” Another noted poor communication “throughout the chain of command.” Due to this lack of communication, those working at reception centres around the province often depended on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to find new (probably less reliable) information. Underscoring all of these comments was a general sense that ESS is not normally considered a key stakeholder and one that needs to be consulted, and many



The Other Side of the Yellow Tape



participants felt that this culture should be changed to be more inclusive.

Communication with Provincial Government & the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA):

Participants noted that ESS staff at reception centres often had little idea what was happening at the provincial level, noting that these individuals were the first-stop for local people who needed information, yet they often had little to offer. As one participant noted “Provincial public announcements should not be made before the details are ironed out with the people who are on the ground answering questions and implementing.” Another noted that, even despite this limitation, “people were “problem-solvers” [and] got the job done even without contact with EOC.” Some participants clearly felt as though ESSNA is excluded from AEMA operations, training, and events. One noted the importance of getting invited to the AEMA Summit and “maybe even [getting] an ESS keynote speaker.” This workshop participant viewed such activities as “infiltrating” AEMA, which of course, implies that ESS is normally excluded or unwanted at such events. In such a context, another workshop participant felt that ESSNA and AEMA must work “more collaboratively.” Another felt that it is “important for us to make it clear what is the role and what value ESS brings to MEP/EOC so that they know what it does and then [we] will begin to [be

included] more.” Finally, ESS staff mentioned several times that politicians should be kept away from reception centres, as this activity takes needed resources and attention from evacuated people for the sake of photo opportunities. As one noted, “What roles can we plan so politicians can be a help, not add to the work and chaos?”

Communication with Municipalities: A few participants noted that affected municipalities often knew little about ESS and their role in a disaster. As one participant noted “Municipalities would like more information on ESSNA and their role. How can they join as a member?” This lack of awareness existed not simply between ESS and local officials, but also between local first-responders who did not fully understand the ESS role. One ESS staff member notes “there is a disconnect between ESS and first responders.”

Communication with Non-Governmental

Organizations: ESS workshop participants felt that, generally, better communication was needed with existing organizations in local affected areas. This includes both non-profit and for-profit organizations. They noted that this often occurs because these local organizations are not involved in ESS initiatives, common training activities, or planning exercises prior to an event. ESS and these organizations should be familiar “with each other’s processes and needs.” The largest for-profit entities mentioned are hotels, which end up housing evacuated persons. One ESS participant notes that ESSNA should “give hotels more information so they know what to expect [from] the populations they are receiving.”

Communication with Local and Affected People:

Effectively communicating with local families and individuals is the area of post-disaster communication most often noted by ESS workshop participants, though participants disagreed as to the extent to which ESS staff and local people needed the same information at the same time. Though some participants made comments that the simultaneous receipt of information put locals and emergency social services staff “on the same level,” others felt that ESS should have a head-start over local people, saying that we must “ensure there is an embargo time prior to the public announcement to allow appropriate numbers of staff and volunteers to prepare.” Either way, ESS workshop participants felt that it remains important to

“Get community involved. Communicate clearly whether [it is a] mandatory or voluntary evacuation.”

Volunteers, as well, require clear and unambiguous communication. Obviously referring to mistakes made during the 2013 flood, one participant noted, through an example, how potential volunteers must be told “that food not prepared in a commercial kitchen cannot be accepted,” suggesting that donated food needed to be turned away

due to a lack of communication. Others suggested that this could be accomplished by keeping donated items away from the reception centre. Similarly, another noted that it is important to educate people about what items are needed and about the desired quality of such items, arguing that we should “educate people to not donate what they cannot or don’t want to [use]. Food expired, dirty holey clothes, half used toiletries. Need to public and social message hourly not to bring in expired, dirty, used items.”

Communication - Strategies for Improvement

Strategies	Responsibility
<p>Quick Win</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved and more open lines of communication are needed between the EOC and ESS during an emergency. Ensure there is an embargo time prior to the public announcement to allow appropriate numbers of staff and volunteers to prepare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipality Province of Alberta
<p>Short Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get invited to the AEMA summit maybe even get an ESS keynote speaker - infiltrate them. Try to build ESS into the annual AEMA summit so that all emergency services personnel have access to this important function. Plan a forum session: “crisis communication” and how to craft it (vs. regular communications) Foster better communication with government department and EOC about making the people/relationship connection Ensure that the right people are communicating information and making decisions. Create better forum for consultation between affected communities/supporting communities, and provincial government strategists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESS Network of Alberta AEMA ESS Network of Alberta ESS Network of Alberta Municipal Government Province of Alberta
<p>Longer Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More discussion and learning are necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Province of Alberta

2. Needs of Affected People

-Workshop participants spoke proudly of the importance that ESS staff take in placing the needs of affected people above all else and taking a people-first approach to disaster response. This was seen as a major success during the 2013 Southern Alberta flood. Still, participants noted several key areas for improvement.

Focus on Locals: First, they noted that evacuees will be most comfortable speaking with and being served by other local people. As such, “local people must be in the lead in all ESS – outside resources, including provincial, need to fit into the local model.” In the local context, people developed creative solutions to problems and “frustrations arose when provincial plans (housing, debit card locations, CRIB) didn’t align with what seemed to be logical community solutions.”

Operating the Reception Centre: Second, the reception centres should be designed to meet the needs of evacuated residents. This includes taking a compassionate approach to the daily operations of the reception centre. One participant noted that in 2013, “some were too zealous in enforcing ordinary rules [by acting as] ‘cupcake cops’ [through] daily inspections.” This focus on order and following the rules may, for some evacuees, be at odds with trying to cope with the effects of the disaster and find some aspect of normalcy amidst ongoing disruption. Although this seemed to be a common sentiment, some did note that the public expectations of the reception centres may be “too high” and that local people may expect services that are simply beyond the scope, reach, or resources available to ESS staff. Still, the ability to meet the needs of a diverse population was clearly stressed by ESS. One mentioned that many seniors were not able to use the available cots and had to sleep in wheel-chairs. This same participant also noted that qualified personnel were necessary to administer and store medication (this was often done by those without training). These needs were particularly acute when family members would drop off elderly evacuees and then disappear without giving reception centre staff necessary care instructions. Another participant noted that reception centres “need to respect diverse food needs for different cultures.” Participants felt it was critical that ESS be represented in the EOC and, more broadly,

that the “human side” of disaster response be included in AEMA activities. As one participant noted, having “ESS represented in EOC is critical!!!” and that AEMA should “think about the human impacts of their bricks and mortar decisions. People are as important as, or more so than, property needs.”

Extending Services: Third, all parties (local residents, ESS Staff, AEMA, etc.) should understand that the effects of a disaster like the 2013 flood linger for some time and that continued support is needed. As one participant noted “People need to realize the ongoing after effects of a disaster go on for 3-5 years and [these people] still need ongoing ESS support.” This approach would also take into consideration that “it’s often not only those who were directly affected” who need ongoing support, suggesting that we should rethink who is “affected” by a disaster; many who did not have flooded homes are still affected both materially and psychologically. Many of these individuals feel extreme guilt over a house that did not flood (when neighbours did flood) and these feelings still require addressing. But, even among those who are directly and materially affected, “some are late coming for help because they have finally run out of [their] own resources.” All of these observations lead to the common conclusion that ESS support should extend long beyond the acute crisis period and well into the disaster recovery period. For a number of years, affected persons will wonder “When will it happen again?” These questions are initiated by “visual triggers and the emotional triggers.” Relatedly, several participants commented that people had few resources to aid them in reentry and that significant questions remain as to whose responsibility it is to provide residents with assistance during this period.

More broadly, participants felt that more work needed to be done to support affected people during the recovery phase of the disaster. This included outlining lines of responsibility, processes, and targeting resources for the recovery period. They felt this objective could be partially achieved by developing a “list of resources and phone numbers for reentry phase that people can access online or [can be] given as a handout.”

Sensitivity: Fourth, participants noted that affected people should not be “revictimized” or traumatized by

well-meaning officials. For instance, one participant noted that discretion with regard to disaster assistance is needed, as “food vouchers [should be] replaced by grocery cards, can spend as needed not all at once” and can be used much more discretely.

Sense of Community: The Learning Event also produced many insights into the need to foster and protect a sense of community among evacuees. Indeed, one participant recounted how evacuees would call the reception centre “looking for information...even though they didn’t really know what info they wanted...looking for ‘sense of community.” This example demonstrates how important the reception centre (and emergency social services more broadly) is in providing hope and a sense of community for affected people. Others spoke of the need to bring in resources so that affected persons can “feel like home” in reception centres.

ESS staff reported several incidents where reception centres were not allowed (by Alberta Health or other government bodies) to create such a sense of community. In one pertinent example, a participant recalled that “health

services [did] not allow use of anything not factory sealed up for sleeping, [so we were not] allowed to put cots close together in support groups.” Others mentioned that the presence of politicians in reception centres actually hindered residents’ ability to feel at home or to build community within those spaces. With that said, evacuees seemed to respond well to reception centre volunteers who were themselves from the local community, “who might be expected to understand what they had experienced, because of sharing similar experiences.”

Empowering Evacuees: Finally, participants noted how people staying in an evacuation centre can be utilized as an important resource. One commented that they “should be given the opportunity to help. It greatly helped the morale of residents staying at the evacuation centre when they were asked to do things and got involved, rather than having nothing to do except worry. Some of them really flourished with the roles they were given.” Empowering evacuated people, rather than treating them as passive victims, should help these individuals to be more resilient and would equip them to better take charge of their recoveries.

Needs of Affected People – Strategies for Improvement

Strategies	Responsibility
Quick Win	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring community resources (i.e., entertainment and activities) to allow people to connect and communicate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that Resident reentry is in ESS plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents staying at the evacuation centre should be given the opportunity to help. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get individuals to think about having a personal plan, a 72 hour kit and some strategies to deal with stress so they can be more prepared. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find ways to recruit volunteers from affected communities. Evacuees seemed to feel more of an instant connection to those who were residents who might be able to understand what they had experienced. Additionally, volunteering will help residents feel less like victims. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Government

Strategies	Responsibility
<p>Longer Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locate resources to help seniors not able to use cots, sleep in wheelchairs, dropped off without medication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGO Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address reluctance of many residents to register. Do more public education about importance of registering. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGO Council

3. Defining Roles and Responsibilities

During the 2013 flood, participants noted that (aside from purely issues of communication, outlined above) problems arose with regard to which level of government maintained responsibility for making which decisions. As one participant reflected, “There are way too many people trying to manage [the flood]: politicians, government, ESS. It was really mixed up and messy.” Another commented that there is a “need to have clear chain of command, roles and expectations and know that we can tell government people to follow the municipal plan.” Within this context, participants noted that government should work to support and enable local autonomy and “for government not to recreate new programs such as human services which creates challenges in terms of the command system.” Yet when the ability for municipalities to meet their residents’ needs is stretched thinly, participants wondered what processes exist for those municipalities to clearly and unambiguously request help. One participant noted that there was “difficulty asking for assistance from outside communities... who to ask, what to ask, when to ask, who does the asking, no clear process” and that there was “huge variance amongst communities regarding capacity to respond and to respond for sustained period of time.”

At the same time, participants mentioned that boundaries between the responsibilities of government and of outside non-profits did not always remain distinct enough and that these organizations often brought in personnel with either inadequate training or competing ideas of how processes should be implemented. As one ESS staff member noted “Red Cross brought in volunteers from all over

Canada who had no idea how to run the area.” Another commented that the chain of authority at local reception centres was unclear as “AHS¹ volunteers were great for intake, Red Cross not so much - not as willing to take direction from ESS.”

ESSNA should begin to recognize the key role Alberta Health Services (AHS) plays at reception centers and invite them to meetings/ as future speakers. This was identified by workshop participants as “Quick Win” task, meaning that the organization currently possesses the resources to accomplish it quickly. Participants also wondered how ESSNA could contact AHS, request help, and provide guidance (rather than solely enforcement) at evacuation centres.

¹ Emergency Social Services connects with both Alberta Human Services and Alberta Health Services. The acronym ‘AHS’ in the context of comments submitted appeared to be consistent with reference to Alberta Health Services. For the purpose of this report, AHS therefore refers to health as opposed to human services.



Team Leaders and team members should include both Town employees and people who do not work for the Town. All teams included in the regional plan should have an understanding of everyone’s role and should train together. Within the context of ESSNA, participants suggested a forum event called “Who’s Who in the Zoo,” which would orient staff to the various stakeholders, lines of command, and responsibilities of those parties in a disaster.

Lastly, workshop participants felt that ESSNA should “sort out the relationship with the Red Cross ahead of time” so as to avoid confusion over lines of command at local evacuation centres. To this end, they felt that outside organizations like the Red Cross should acknowledge that “local sets the “standard”. All supports coming in (NGO, provincial, volunteer, etc.) [must] fit the standard rather than the local changing to suit need of group.”

Defining Roles and Responsibilities - Strategies for Improvement

Strategies	Responsibility
Quick Win	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESSNA to recognize key role AHS plays at reception centers and invite them to meetings/ as future speakers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESS Network of Alberta
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team Leaders and team members should include both Town employees and people who don’t work for the Town. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sort out relationship with Red Cross ahead of time and have standards in place so that they can be directed with the community needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify and differentiate the EOC responsibilities and municipal responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share plans, lists of resources, etc. Can do through the website. As well as be the network not just the ESSNA group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get NGO groups trained and invoke them later in the event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESS personnel need to be integral part of the decision making process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Province of Alberta
Short Term	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local sets the “standard.” All supports coming in (NGO, provincial, volunteer, etc.) should fit the standard rather than the local changing to suit need of group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Government

Strategies	Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build mutual support for ESS, provide mutual aid across boundaries, knowing we have common language and training • Invite AHS to meetings to imbed into ESS network • Begin regional meetings and to work through or with AEMA to include more ESS • Organize a Forum session: Who is Who in the Zoo - understanding the POC and how levels of government work together • ESS must be integrated part of the “system” with clear cut communication strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other • Other • Province of Alberta • ESS Network of Alberta • Municipal Government
<h3>Longer Term</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an electronic registration form that will work Alberta-wide, and includes sections that can be forwarded or printed off for other agencies (i.e. Red Cross, Fire or Police investigations), a re-entry section for the appropriate utilities and groups, a FOIP/restricted checkbox to protect personal information sharing and the protection of those who are vulnerable (i.e. women in an emergency shelter). • Generate template forms for municipalities to track overtime for staff and make the cost-recovery process from the provincial government faster and more efficient. City of Medicine Hat has an excellent template already. • Get the registration information to all groups with one intake all at the same time (Red Cross brought in volunteers from all over Canada who had no idea how to run the area. • Calgary will ask NGO’s to take over donations in future. • Determine appropriate roles for political leaders • Establish the companies willing to step up and volunteer their help, list them and keep in contact with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Province of Alberta • Municipal Government • NGO Council • NGO Council • Municipal Government & Province of Alberta • Municipal Government

4. Training

Learning event participants felt that they were well-trained for the 2013 flood, but did note several areas in which training might be enhanced. Specifically, they noted that training exercises must cross organizational boundaries and take place in a more collaborative fashion, must prepare ESS staff for re-entry and recovery issues, and should address ways to engage and manage volunteers.

Regional Training: Generally, workshop participants felt that emergency social services should participate more often in training exercises with AEMA, AHS, Red Cross, and other key parties. This joint training, participants felt, would help organizations with different operating procedures better work together during a future disaster. Many participants felt this training should be done regionally, in ways that bring together the same parties that would be brought together in an emergency.

As one participant outlines, this process will benefit all of these organizations (including ESSNA), as “Every team in the emergency plan needs to understand the other roles of the other teams and doing some training together for an even better understanding.” Participants indicated that this would help these parties more effectively communicate with each other, pointing out that “Common training, common language for providers, across the community, the region and provincially” is needed. Participants felt that this joint training would help everyone at the EOC better understand the unique role of ESS, with one staff member saying that “EOC should be present occasionally to have a clear understanding of ESS operations and the human impact.” Participants also noted that this joint training should be done sooner, rather than “waiting until we feel ready or sufficiently organized.”

Participants felt that there should be joint training exercises with ESS Staff, AEMA/provincial staff, Red Cross, local officials, and other relevant regional stakeholders (identified by ESSNA as a Quick Win that could be achieved by municipalities). Though this should be joint training, participants also recommended that ESS Staff, volunteers, local officials and other pertinent parties complete ICS 100 and 200 training which will allow them to use a common language and set of practices.



Database of Contacts: Participants recommended maintaining a database that will help match local needs to volunteer capabilities. They suggest “use of tablets and Google Docs with solar chargers so that you are not dependent on server, use multiple cell providers, able to dictate rather than type if needed. Preload EOC plans & contact data base, needs to be updated annually at least by the users.” Another wants to “use a provincial standard registration system on iPad with wrist band that ties to their record - press send to province. Then Red Cross, DRP etc can get info from that one spot and all the data for each person is linked to their one record - backed up securely in several government sites.” The database of volunteers could be a municipal responsibility. As one participant highlights, we should “have a data base of types of helpers from registration [from the 2013 flood], used to populate your data base for future.” ESS staff felt that this planning (considering how volunteers may be used in future events) should not be done last minute, with one adding that “Volunteer planning should not be an afterthought.” Another ESS staff member noted that municipalities may take the lead in preparing such a database and that they might “use Google Docs to list what [are] the needs and where/who can go help [but this] needs a big disclaimer that municipality is not responsible for matches made there.”

The Other Side of the Yellow Tape

Re-Entry and Recovery Issues: Participants also felt that ESS training should go further to address recovery and re-entry issues. As one participant stated, “Is there a recovery plan in the ESS process? When does the recovery process start who provides the go ahead for re -entry statement, who takes initial responsibility and provides direction and when and who is the responsibility handed off to when ESS close down?” Another wondered “Do NASA launch a space shuttle without a recovery plan to bring it home again? Does that plan evolve/change based on circumstances that could affect it’s re-entry?”, suggesting the need for more comprehensive planning for re-entry and recovery.

Mitigating Staff and Volunteer Burnout: Finally, participants pointed out that staff and volunteer burnout

during the acute phase of the disaster can severely limit the ability to provide needed services to affected people. Several participants mentioned this need and suggested that staff needed “short workable shifts.” This highlighted the “importance of setting up a shift schedule so that you don’t have staff and volunteers burning out.” Another added that “ESS staff burnout after a sustained event lasting longer than 72 hours.” One solution to this issue, pointed out by a ESS workshop participant is to model shift scheduling after Strathcona County’s model, where they “have all staff show up initially, determine number of staff needed at that time, set up a shift schedule, [and] send rest home until their shift. [This] makes more efficient use of staff, and doesn’t burn out all staff at the front end.”

Training - Strategies for Improvement

Strategies	Responsibility
Quick Win	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have standardized forms for tracking time and payroll as well as samples of agreements would be helpful for smaller communities without the same resources to be able to develop important pieces without having to re-invent the wheel and invest a lot of staffing time in doing these pieces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESS Network of Alberta
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a data base of individuals that are trained in ESS management and promote it to municipalities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESS Network of Alberta
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towns and cities should be preparing for the next flood season by using the database of volunteers from the flood of 2013 to create and train teams to meet the operational needs of an evacuation centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and practice in municipalities’ identified roles in the ESS plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare all necessary forms ahead of time and have them in different buildings for access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Government

Strategies	Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold training and practice at least once a month. Invite other committees from different community to join the practice. If possible invite volunteers as well. Get feedback from participants. Recap, make changes, incorporating the changes. • Identify ‘good practices’, regional workshops to provide training • Have all staff show up initially, determine number of staff needed at that time, set up a shift schedule, send rest home until their shift. Makes more efficient use of staff, and doesn’t burn out all staff at the front end (Strathcona County already does this). • Have a good idea, based on past experience, as to the kinds of tasks that volunteers will be needed for, before the Red Cross takes over volunteer management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Government • Other • Municipal Government • Municipal Government
Short Term	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan table tops in spring and fall every year. . • There should be Team Leaders for all critical functions of operating an evacuation centre, as set out in Red Cross ESS materials: Information & Referral, Lodging, Personal Services, Clothing, Food, Volunteer Coordination. etc. • Team Leaders should have teams of trained individuals who have been well-oriented to the responsibilities of their teams. They should also have had opportunities to rehearse their roles prior to an emergency occurring. • Team Leaders should know each other’s responsibilities, so that they can step into other TLs roles, if required. • There should be alternates for the Evacuation Centre Manager and Team Leader positions, in case: i) individuals are unable to make it to the evacuation centre; ii) to allow for a system of shift coverage to be put in place, so that key leadership positions can be spelled off. • Standardized training, plans, and docs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Government • Municipal Government • Municipal Government • Municipal Government • Municipal Government • Other

Strategies	Responsibility
Longer Term	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Regional and Online Training - Establish skills Best Practices and Mutual Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define what is the process to override the normal rules for health inspectors (some were too zealous in enforcing ordinary rules ‘cupcake cops’ daily inspections) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGO Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICS should train staff for just a few jobs, not all positions. That approach makes it too watered down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGO Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create specific work/rotational schedules. Allocate responsibilities based on experience and knowledge, train staff in a secondary role. Create mentorship to train junior staff to assume a senior role in a ESS structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESS Network of Alberta

5. Policy and Planning

The Learning Event participants made several recommendations, beyond simply more training events, that should be implemented into disaster policy and planning procedures. This section outlines those changes and suggestions.

Common Templates and Documents: First, and perhaps most importantly, they pointed out that ESSNA should maintain an Emergency Plan, including a template and resources, an outline of individual roles and positions, and so on. Such a document would facilitate training exercises. This approach might also include standardized forms, templates, and training documents that can be used throughout the province.

Inclusion of ESS within the Incident Command System (ICS): Second, participants pointed out that ESS activities and personnel should be included “within ICS rather than being buried in Operations.” Others mentioned “adopting the ICS model” and being “structured under ICS model” or as a “section of ICS.” All of these comments suggest that ESS staff want more integration with the activities, policies, and procedures followed by AEMA. Overall, they

felt that it is important to create “a fifth section chief box for ESS so this role is at the table and linked directly into reporting and communication at the EOC.” They felt that this would help emergency managers to “bring the people side in from the beginning.” Such an approach would facilitate “clearly defined roles” between AHS, ESS, and other service-providing parties.

Pre-Established Contracts: Third, Learning Event participants felt it was important to establish contracts with purveyors of products and services in advance of an event so as to not “end up receiving a hefty bill after the fact.” This includes not just private sector purveyors, but also with schools and other public entities that may be used. One participant suggests that “Agreements for housing should be included in Joint Use Agreements that are signed with schools. That agreement should include facility monitor and janitorial agreements should be in place with all community partners.”

Identifiable and Transparent Lines of Command: Finally, they commented that at many of the evacuation centres, responsible officials were not easily identifiable, either by staff, volunteers, or evacuees. Participants recommended having a system that makes such individuals

easily identifiable, including “vests/t-shirts or some other means of easily distinguishing people who are working/volunteering at the centre in an approved capacity.” They also suggested that “There needs to be a means of

distinguishing those staying at the evacuation centre, from all the other traffic coming through the centre.” Many suggested a wrist-band or t-shirt system.

Policy and Planning - Strategies for Improvement

Strategies	Responsibility
Quick Win	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a regional cooperative group with local Emergency Management and ESS persons • Create a Mandate • Equip kits with satellite radios and phones and keep serviced and ready for emergencies • Make people in leadership positions easily identifiable (vests and t-shirts). Also, develop means of identifying those staying at the evacuation centre from all other traffic coming through centre. • Team Leaders and team members should be a mix of residents and non- residents. • Potential to modify ICS to incorporate a fifth section chief. • Improve the registration process - only one registration per individual, with this one registration - all decisions should be put in place • Create some service standards and standard numbers to help understand how many volunteers are needed as we are evacuating x amount of home (have a ratio of homes to volunteers that can be multiplied to fit the situation). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Collaboration • ESS Network of Alberta • Municipal Government • Municipal Government • Municipal Government • Regional Collaboration • ESS Network of Alberta • Municipal Government
Short Term	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on regional plans and lobby government on setting training standards for ESS so trained people can assist municipalities across the province. • Standardization of agreements, forms, and processes province wide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Collaboration • ESS Network of Alberta

Strategies	Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build service standards into ESS plan so when others come to help they understand the standard, can deliver the standard and are empowered to make decisions within the standards • Implement a series of standards that the community can use when dealing with outside agencies. • Review current joint use agreements and amend to include ESS specific requirements • Create a service standard to allow fluid integration of internal and external services (like Airdrie). • Through networking with communities identify current practices and develop common tools based on shared experiences and tools (i.e. financial tracking template, leverage current coding used by utilities, continue to network and build capacity within communities). • Have preparations in place for emergency situations, using formats like ICS would streamline supports and services. • Generate a more streamlined registration system. Current system with Red Cross was not adequate for the volume and/or complexity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Government • Municipal Government • Municipal Government • Municipal Government • Other • Municipal Government • Other
<p>Longer Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a provincially standardized registration system. • Develop some best practices and standards around ESS training. • Develop standards and best practices for ESS training and framework. • Reentry planning should become a training strategy for ESS. • Add a human component to operational services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other • Regional Collaboration • Other • ESS Network of Alberta • Municipal Government

Strategies	Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish service standards for how they will operate ESS. Once formed, guesswork is taken out when providing mutual aid, province and NGO's would work within these guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a provincial standard registration system on iPad with wrist band that ties to their record - press send to province. Then Red Cross, DRP etc can get info from that one spot and all the data for each person is linked to their one record. This should be backed up securely in several government sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Province of Alberta
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a template for the Municipal emergency plans to be inserted to support ESS. Develop a communications process for engaging municipal and provincial levels of government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Province of Alberta
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep working journals in reception centers and for working ESS staff on their shifts to help with event documentation, reporting and event debriefed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Government

6. Funding

SS workshop participants frequently mentioned the need for better resources if they are to effectively meet the needs of affected and evacuated individuals during and after a disaster. Participants mentioned that ESS work can currently take up only a small portion of their attention, as most are employed full-time with various municipalities in other roles. One participant said that “all ESS have other full time jobs unless in Calgary - so it is an addition off the side of your desk.” Another added that “many of us have ESS on the corner of our desks and while we see the regional model as important we are stretched too far already in our local commitments.” This stretching, of course, is a matter of resource availability. With more funding to support ESS work, many of these staff members could dedicate more of their time to training, collaboration, and developing a better infrastructure for post-disaster service delivery. While some participants spoke about specific activities (like training or development of best practices) that require more financial support from

the provincial government, others mentioned funding in general terms, such as “Money ... The big M is needed at Provincial level” and “Need resources - \$” Participants frequently mentioned feeling stretched thin and experiencing difficulty balancing their ESS role with their everyday job responsibilities.

Funding - Strategies for Improvement

The problems mentioned above might be alleviated if funding were made available by the Government of Alberta to partially release ESS staff from other job responsibilities, or alternatively, to assist municipalities in hiring dedicated half-time or full-time ESS staff, particularly in Alberta's most vulnerable communities.

Next Steps and Paths Forward

Although the above sections contain many useful and implementable strategies for improvement, they can be broadly captured under several larger-scale approaches. This report will be made public, and serve to inform ESSNA and its partners in building appropriate strategies to improve the delivery of Emergency Social Services for Albertans. Presentation materials based on this learning event are being developed and the co-authors of the report have been asked to present the findings at the 2014 AEMA Summit in November. Further, a presentation on this report will be included in the 2014 ESSNA Forum several days later.

Observations

Prior to this ESSNA Learning Event there was a general sense that ESS personnel may have negative perspectives directed toward the Province of Alberta as a result of their experiences in the 2013 Southern Alberta floods - this was not necessarily the case when one considers the strategies and the identified stakeholders most capable of delivering solutions. A significant number of recommendations and



strategies (see Appendix A) are attributed to municipalities (45%), and networks such as ESSNA (15%) or others (17%). There was a strong sense among workshop participants that local officials and volunteers are in the best position to impact the actions and recommendations; local officials and volunteers understand important norms, perspectives, community patterns and relationships that can play a significant role in helping community members cope in the face of a disaster. That said, there is still work required to sort through the recommendations and move toward strategies - especially in establishing appropriate roles and responsibilities when dealing with evacuees and community members.

For municipalities, planning appeared to be a consistent theme among the recommendations made by learning event participants. More specifically, participants identified the need for municipalities to clarify roles and responsibilities within their own systems and with external systems like the provincial operations centre - and to plan for that clarity in advance of any future incidents. As well, it was acknowledged that municipal emergency management plans tend to account for the first few days of an event and fail to consider longer term activations and the processes involved with resident reentry. Finally, as it relates to planning, there is a need for training and practice within the municipality.

Another recommendation for consideration by municipalities involves the integration of a community development approach within the reception centre; using evacuees to fulfill some of the volunteer roles and responsibilities as a means to engage people in appropriate activities thereby improving their sense of contribution, and as an option to minimize volunteer burnout. As well, it was mentioned by participants that municipalities have a role in educating community members around preparedness for disaster situations.

For ESSNA, three key themes emerged in terms of recommendations for the network: improving communications among stakeholders, sharing best practices, and supporting ESS training in Alberta. As ESSNA is made up of ESS personnel from local communities across Alberta, it is suggested to be in a strong position to help bridge understanding and relationships

between provincial government departments, the NGO Council and municipalities. The connection between ESSNA and local programs also puts it in an ideal position to collect and sort through best practices that emerge, and then to share those practices with others. Finally, ESSNA was recognized as an appropriate source to help build or even deliver training to local communities in Alberta.

Recommendations for the Province of Alberta tended to focus on communications and standards. There were a number of powerful suggestions that local operations centres and specifically the ESS operations were not consulted prior to important decisions being made that were to impact reception centres and evacuees - better communications could have resulted in different programmatic decisions. To that end, having operating standards in place prior to disaster situations may have improved deliver in local communities.

The opportunity provided by this learning event to share observations and experiences between communities was a significant factor in the success of the session. Many participants acknowledged the important roles and responsibilities played by staff and volunteers from neighbouring communities, and it was therefore identified that mutual aid agreements and collaborative efforts in emergency social services should be encouraged and facilitated in the future.

Next Steps

This report will be published and made publicly available on the ESSNA website at www.essna.ca. The learning event working group will be charged with the responsibility of examining recommendations and determining priorities to be discussed by ESSNA in its 2015 Strategic Planning exercise.

Local communities are encouraged to review the recommendations and, where possible, take the necessary and appropriate steps to incorporate the ideas into current emergency management plans. Organizations that implement strategies as a result of this report are encouraged to communicate their changes with ESSNA - it is valuable information for ESSNA to track any differences they were able to facilitate due to learning events such as the one held in High River.



Conclusions

The ESSNA Learning Event group identified several goals as “Quick Win” objectives. Still, many of these objectives (like preparing a database of individuals trained in ESS Management) require substantial work. As participants noted, most ESS staff are doing the work in addition to other full-time job responsibilities, essentially performing such tasks pro-bono. As they note, it comes down to a matter of resources; greater resources are needed from the Province of Alberta and from AEMA to fund and facilitate the work being done by ESSNA.

Beyond that, workshop participants frequently mentioned the necessity for AEMA to take emergency social services staff more seriously, to involve them in EOC activities and in training exercises, to communicate clearly and unambiguously with ESSNA, and to recognize the important role that social services personnel play in a disaster.

Broadly, however, Learning Event participants felt as though ESS staff performed their roles professionally and sensitively during the 2013 flood, especially given the limits of time and funding discussed above. Within better lines of communication to the provincial government, additional resources, and more advance planning, this performance could surely be enhanced should Alberta experience another event like the Southern Alberta Flood.

Appendix A: Strategies for Improvement, by Responsible Organization

Strategies

Emergency Social Services Network of Alberta (ESSNA)

Quick Wins

- Create improved and more open lines of communication are needed between the EOC and ESS during an emergency.
- ESSNA should recognize key role AHS plays at reception centers and invite them to meetings/ as future speakers.
- Have standardized forms for tracking time and payroll as well as samples of agreements would be helpful for smaller communities without the same resources to be able to develop important pieces without having to re-invent the wheel and invest a lot of staffing time in doing these pieces.
- Prepare a data base of individuals that are trained in ESS management and promote it to municipalities.
- Create a Mandate

Short Term

- Get invited to the AEMA summit maybe even get an ESS keynote speaker - infiltrate them.
- Forum session: “crisis communication” and how to craft it (vs. regular communications)
- Better communication with government department and EOC about making the people/relationship connection.
- Organize a Forum session: Who is Who in the Zoo - understanding the POC and how levels of government work together.
- Standardization of agreements, forms, and processes province wide.

Longer Term

- Create specific work/rotational schedules. Allocate responsibilities based on experience and knowledge, train staff in a secondary role. Create mentorship to train junior staff to assume a senior role in a ESS structure.
- Reentry planning should become a training strategy for ESS.

Municipal Government

Quick Wins

- Ensure that Resident reentry is in ESS plan
- Residents staying at the evacuation centre should be given the opportunity to help
- Get individuals to think about having a personal plan, a 72 hour kit and some strategies to deal with stress so that you can be more prepared.
- Find ways to recruit volunteers from affected communities. Evacuees seemed to feel more of an instant connection to those who were residents who might be able to understand what they had experienced. Additionally, volunteering will help residents feel less like victims.
- Clarify and differentiate the EOC responsibilities and municipal responsibilities.
- Towns and cities should be preparing for the next flood season by using the database of volunteers from the flood of 2013 to create and train teams to meet the operational needs of an evacuation centre.
- Information & practice in municipalities’ identified roles in the ESS plan

Appendix A Continued

Strategies

Longer Term

- An electronic registration form that will work Alberta-wide, and includes sections that can be forwarded or printed off for other agencies (i.e. Red Cross, Fire or Police investigations), a re-entry section for the appropriate utilities and groups, a FOIP/restricted checkbox to protect personal information sharing and the protection of those who are vulnerable (i.e. women in an emergency shelter).
- Template forms for municipalities to track overtime for staff and make the cost-recovery process from the provincial government faster and more efficient. City of Medicine Hat has an excellent template already.
- Have someone add a human component to operational services.
- Establish service standards for how they will operate ESS. Once formed, guesswork is taken out when providing mutual aid, province and NGO's would work within these guidelines.
- Keep working journals in reception centers and for working ESS staff on their shifts to help with event documentation, reporting and event debriefed.

Province of Alberta

Quick Wins

- ESS personnel need to be integral part of the decision making process

Short Term

- Better forum for consultation between affected communities/ supporting communities, and provincial govt strategists
- Begin regional meetings and to work through or with AEMA to include more ESS

Longer Term

- More discussion and learning are necessary
- Use a provincial standard registration system on iPad with wrist band that ties to their record - press send to province. Then Red Cross, DRP etc can get info from that one spot and all the data for each person is linked to their one record. This should be backed up securely in several government sites.
- Develop a template for the Municipal emergency plans to be inserted to support ESS Develop a communications process for engaging municipal and provincial levels of government
- Define what is the process to override the normal rules for health inspectors (some were too zealous in enforcing ordinary rules 'cupcake cops' daily inspections)

AEMA

Short Term

- Try to build ESS into the annual AEMA summit so that all emergency services personnel have access to this important function.

Strategies

NGO Council

Longer Term

- Locate resources to help seniors not able to use cots, sleep in wheelchairs, dropped off without medication.
- Address reluctance of many residents to register. Do more public education about importance of registering.
- Get the registration information to all groups with one intake all at the same time (Red Cross brought in volunteers from all over Canada who had no idea how to run the area.
- Calgary will ask NGO's to take over donations in future
- What roles can we plan so politicians can be a help not add to the work and chaos
- Provide Regional and Online Training - Establish skills Best Practices and Mutual Training

Regional Collaboration

Quick Wins

- Develop a regional cooperative group with local Emergency Management and ESS persons
- Potential to modify ICS to incorporate a fifth section chief.

Short Term

- Work on regional plans and lobby government on setting training standards for ESS so trained people can assist municipalities across the province.

Longer Term

- Develop some best practices and standards around ESS training.

Other

Quick Wins

- Bring community resources (i.e., entertainment and activities) to allow people to connect and communicate
- Share plans, lists of resources, etc. Can do through the website. As well as be the network not just the ESS-NA group.
- Identify 'good practices', regional workshops to provide training.
- Get NGO groups trained and invoke them later in the event.

Short Term

- Building mutual support for ESS, provide mutual aid across boundaries, knowing we have common language and training
- Invite AHS to these meetings to imbed into ESS network
- Standardized training, plans, and docs.

Appendix A Continued

Strategies

- Through networking with communities identify current practices and develop common tools based on shared experiences and tools (i.e. financial tracking template, leverage current coding used by utilities, continue to network and build capacity within communities).
- More streamlined registration system. Current system with Red Cross was not adequate for the volume and/or complexity

Longer Term

- Establish the companies willing to step up and volunteer their help, list them and keep in contact with them
- Provide Regional and Online Training - Establish skills Best Practices and Mutual Training.
- Adopt a provincially standardized registration system.
- Develop standards and best practices for ESS training and framework.

Appendix B: List of Participating Municipalities and Partners

Airdrie	Municipal District of Foothills
Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA)	Grande Prairie
Alberta Human Services	High River
Alberta's NGO Council	Lethbridge
Banff	Medicine Hat
Municipal District of Bighorn	Okotoks
Calgary	Red Deer
Canmore	Redwood Meadows
Chestermere	Rocky View County
Cochrane	Strathcona County
Drumheller	Turner Valley
Edmonton	



Want to Learn More About ESSNA?

Feel free to email us at info@essna.ca
or visit www.essna.ca