

PEI FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION Annual Meeting, October 28, 2001
Hosted by North River Fire Department

The annual meeting was attended by 20 departments with 72 members in attendance. Opening remarks by President Garth O'Brien and Host Chief Norman MacPhee followed by a moment of silence.

Angus Orford of Maritime Electric spoke on electrical safety for emergency personnel. Maritime Electric tried to get into every department. Angus spoke on distribution lines and how four firefighters in the United States died as the result of a downed line. Some of the resources on electrical emergencies are fire publications such as Fire House and our IFSTA manuals. Angus touched on departments answering pole fires, departments will only look after suppression once power has been shut off with a Maritime Electric crew on the site because back up power may be present. Small transformers that are on fire may contain PCB(insulating oil) the only time that PCBs are a danger is when there is a fire - in this case keep upwind and cordon off the area. Keep all vehicles at least one pole length away. Angus touched on the importance of electrical safety when using ariel apparatus. If your apparatus does contact electrical lines stay in the vehicle and do not jump clear (same applies to car accidents) until Maritime Electric crews are on the site.

After showing a video, Angus fielded questions. Motor vehicle accidents are the most common hazard that fire departments will come upon with electricity. Pulling meters is not a recommended practice for fire departments, the best action is to shut the power off at the box if there is any other threat wait for Maritime Electric crew. Maritime Electric headquarters can shut the power off to a substation but it is not recommended.

Garth introduced Larry Avery who spoke on 911.

Larry has been Provincial coordinator for about a year and has been with 911 since 1999. 911 is still an ongoing working program. Larry spoke on the importance of Civic Addressing. The 911 system is consumer friendly. The system works well with land lines but not with cell phones. The three answering points are a benefit because the call takers are able to answer the calls well. The information from a land line 911 call includes the name of the person who is paying the phone bill. The information that is relayed is the civic address, route name or number, and community. Thirty percent of 911 calls are cell phone calls. Most MVAs are called in on cell phones. 911 has given departments tools to help them make the transition to 911 with road maps and the Caris Locator (which is not used by many). PEI is at the forefront with 911 compared to other Provinces in the region. 911 has taken up to 42,000 calls since it was implemented.

Larry explained the medical dispatch system in Nova Scotia and how fire departments participate in EMS calls. Regarding the problems we have in PEI with FD-EMS Larry would like to see PEI follow the NS model. NB is talking on making one 911 centre. There have been mistakes in the past but we must try and learn from them. 911 is looking at the 911 EMO Pic Radio for mutual aid and communication.

Some problems with 911 are department boundaries, they must have them defined and worked out. Some complaints of 911 calls being put on hold when other calls are coming in at the same time. 911 has tried to work with FDs and EMS to give them the information they need, including telling EMS which FD they would need to call for assistance.

Larry fielded questions. Question raised regarding Message Centre faxing information to Fire Departments on the emergency. Larry explained that this was an issue that is between the department and Message Centre. The \$.30 cost on the phone bill goes to Island Tel to pay for the

system and maintain the equipment. Message Centre is looking at putting in a 911 screen with the information on the screen.

Chief Joan Kennedy (Station 21 & 22 Halifax Region - Lake Echo) spoke on a death in the line of duty.

Joan gave a history on a call where they lost a member to an MVA medical assist call. They came across another accident involving one of their own members and an ambulance. Questions that were asked included how did it happen? What was he thinking? Where was the accident? How could something like this happen to our community? How could all three departments arrive at the scene at the same time? Why was his truck parked on the side of the road? Didn't he hear the ambulance coming? Who was at fault? Who can we blame? Once firefighters wear their gear, they think they are invincible. Ron MacDonald was a 42 year old volunteer of 5 years with Level 1, he had a wife of 16 years, loved people, always helping his fellow firefighters and the community, and worked as a chimney sweep. The Critical Incident Stress debriefing was held 2 days later, the emotions included denial, disbelief, anger, confusion, sorrow, fear, and guilt.

The first mistake was that the accident call came from the nearest pay phone. The second mistake was that the area of the emergency is a grey area for 3 stations. There were a lot of firefighters driving around looking for the emergency. Adrenalin is one of the biggest problems and people do not think.

What do we teach our firefighters? Fire behavior, firefighter safety, personal protection and equipment, SCBAs. What we do not teach our firefighters; control the adrenalin, what is the emergency, what am I going to do, what do I need?

