

## GSAR Steering Committee

Monday, April 21, 2008

April 16, 2008: 1830-2130 hrs  
Red Deer Flying Club

Attendees (and affiliation)  
Committee Member\*

Rod Dietrich, Search and Rescue  
Alberta (SARAB), President\*  
Bev Sliger, Search and Rescue  
Alberta, Vice President\*  
Don Drebert, Brazeau Regional  
Search and Rescue, President\*  
Karen Drebert, Brazeau Regional  
Search and Rescue\*

Jim Thoreson, Canadian Air Search  
and Rescue Association (CASARA)\*  
Mike Self, RCMP 'K' Division,  
Provincial SAR Coordinator\*  
Fred Tyrrell, AEMA, Manager of  
Stakeholder Relations  
Scott Pepper, AEMA, GSAR  
Coordinator\*

Fred Tyrrell facilitated the meeting. He brings professional expertise in community development as well long experience as a park ranger.

Scott Pepper is the AEMA Emergency Management Officer assigned to the GSAR file. Scott has worked with the volunteer community, marketing and adult education.

Mike Self participates as a subject matter expert in areas of emergency management, operations and tasking.

Jim Thoreson provides insights from his perspective as a founding member of SARAB and as a member of CASARA active in operations and database management.

Rod, Bev, Don and Karen share their perspectives as SAR volunteers and leaders in the SARAB community.

Fred described the AEMA mandate to develop an integrated emergency management system in which the Agency has the responsibility of working with partner organisations to define standards of service that are dependable, accountable, sustainable and credible. Provincial assets in emergency management will extend to HUSAR<sup>1</sup> and CBRNE<sup>2</sup> and include a memorandum of understanding with STARS<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Heavy Urban Search and Rescue

<sup>2</sup> Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear Explosive

<sup>3</sup> Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society

Fred stressed that GSAR remains as an important component of the emergency management system and that the Agency has committed to support and strengthen SAR providers including SARAB.

Fred then engaged the volunteers in a dialogue that was essentially a SWOT<sup>4</sup> analysis of SARAB. Together they explored the significance of the Societies Act, Objects of Incorporation and Bylaws. They challenged perceptions of the role and values of SARAB, and hurdles that the participants face as leaders of the organisation. Then they focused on what SARAB needs from AEMA in order to renew itself and to respond to input from member groups and volunteers.

The participants spoke about challenges in communications between the SARAB Board and Executive and member SAR groups, especially the newer, smaller and more remote groups. They cited gaps in access to training grant information, the shortcomings of the SARAB web site, the ineffectiveness of the committee structure in establishing standards or accreditation. They were frustrated by the reliance on unwritten rules to govern SAR management and the lack of reliable SAR statistics.

Jim Thoreson offered hope from his experiences during the early days of SARAB and the roots of CASARA. Jim described governance-based solutions such as the national directorship model used by CASARA; and technical responses to accreditation and standards issues such as the CASARA database management system. Jim readily offered to share the CASARA Memorandum of Acceptance (MOA) between their member organizations, and the Contribution Agreement (CA) that defines the relationship between CASARA and the DND. Jim offered to explore giving SARAB access to the database system developed by CASARA. The participants were enthusiastic about these developments and were eager to share them with the membership<sup>5</sup>.

Mike Self offered to provide SARAB with electronic versions of all forms that SAR managers need to track events in order to submit to the RCMP for compensation for sharing with the groups via the web site. This was another concrete development that was warmly received.

On behalf of AEMA, and in cooperation with The Ministry of Cultural and Community Spirit and the Community Development Office, Fred offered to assist the SARAB executive by:

- Consulting with the regional boards and member groups
- Supporting a grass roots renewal process of organisational development through facilitated strategic planning sessions or retreats
- Providing direct access to the AEMA management team through inclusion in the consultations with 13 communities that will take place in May and June this year
- Honouring SAR volunteers, defining core values, identifying common goals and desired outcomes.

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<sup>4</sup> Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats

<sup>5</sup> MOA and CA will be posted on SARAB web site

Fred specifically asked if SARAB executive had any concerns about AEMA working directly with the member-organizations at the community level and was told that this was not an issue.

As the meeting concluded the volunteers expressed optimism at having concrete progress to share with the SARAB community. They were excited at the prospect of being treated as partners and being consulted in the process of establishing acceptable service standards.

The participants agreed to share the meeting notes with SARAB members and committed to sharing the details with attendees at the AGM in Lethbridge.

The committee agreed to meet again on June 5th at 7:00 p.m. in the AEMA offices in Edmonton (14515 – 122 Ave).

Scott Pepper  
AEMA  
GSAR Coordinator