

Background/Situation Analysis

An Environmental Protection Commission established in 2005 following the Lake Wabamun spill made a series of recommendations to improve Alberta's ability to respond to environmental incidents. The Commission believed "Alberta needs a **world class emergency management and response system** in order to address and manage the risks the province faces." <http://environment.gov.ab.ca/info/library/7584.pdf>

In part, a number of the Commission's recommendations have been implemented, although the overarching intent of the recommendations has yet to be realized. While it takes time to build a world class emergency management and response system, and more time still to become 'how we do things', emergencies won't wait.

"Mutual Aid Alberta" origin

Alberta has a number of mutual aid emergency response groups in various stages of maturity (0 – 25 years). Their reason for existing relates to the risks *in or to* the area and the reality that in a large-scale emergency:

- Response can't be big enough...or fast enough
- Resources will come from outside boundaries
- An established network in advance makes response more effective

Membership in groups voluntary and involves agreements that allow organizations to utilize and draw on the resources of one another. Groups generally fall into one of the following 'types':

- Municipal only
- Industry only
- Municipal/industry combined

Since 2009, Mutual aid groups in Alberta have come together to discuss best practices, common challenges and solutions. In 2011, a Mutual Aid Alberta committee was established to identify the needs of these groups, and how to address them. Many common needs were identified. In 2014, we become a registered society.

What we need from Alberta government - Policy vs. Politics

1. Endorsement for Mutual Aid in principle (regulations and policies) and practice (participation).
 - a. Language such as "Participate in mutual aid organizations if they exist in your area, or consider establishing a mutual aid network in your area if one doesn't exist".
 - b. Participation of Provincial/Regulatory agencies with response roles (AEMA/AHS/AESRD/AER)
2. Common Mutual Aid Emergency Response Framework
 - a. Assist in developing and be "part-owner" of a common framework for mutual aid response throughout the Province
 - b. Establish a province-wide network for emergency resource equipment and services to respond to any emergency that may occur.
3. Province-wide "risk-based land use planning" principles to govern development near industrial facilities, other risk profile considerations (DG routes, Rail, Pipelines, flood plains, etc.)
 - a. Currently, municipalities determine where and what development occurs. Not all employ risk-based land use planning. Decisions made by councils of the day may not consider existing/future risk to people and environment.
4. Resident data collection Province-wide and ability to reliably and consistently notify Albertans of emergencies in their area
 - a. Population growth and ability to keep contact lists current is a concern
 - b. Industry visitation to residents puts people at risk

We need to use our resources wisely, and leave a well-managed province to future generations.