



Regional Evacuee Assistance Exercise to Launch Emergency Preparedness Week

Date: Friday, April 30, 2010

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — To launch Emergency Preparedness Week (May 2 – 8, 2010), the Victoria Emergency Management Agency (VEMA) is partnering with the Oak Bay Community Disaster Assistance Team and Saanich Emergency Social Services to host a *Regional Evacuee Assistance Exercise* on Monday morning.

Media are invited to witness what happens to evacuated residents once they step into an emergency Reception Centre. Due to issues of confidentiality, media would not be allowed in Reception Centres during a real disaster.

What: *Regional Evacuee Assistance Exercise* to launch Emergency Preparedness Week
When: Monday, May 3, 2010, from 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.
Where: Royal Canadian Legion – Trafalgar/Pro Patria Branch, 411 Gorge Road East

Media are asked to access the building from the main entrance on Dunedin Road. Parking is available at the Legion parking lot accessible from Dunedin Road, or across the street in the Robbins Parking Lot.

REGIONAL EXERCISE SCENARIO: A large apartment fire has forced the evacuation of a 40-unit building. Several suites have been heavily damaged by the fire and many have sustained smoke and water damage. It is unlikely the building will be reopened within the next three days. It is 10 a.m. and a Reception Centre has been opened for evacuated residents at a nearby Legion.

The Legion hall will be set up just as it would in a real fire evacuation. Evacuee Assistance volunteers will greet and “triage” evacuees upon arrival, as some may be injured, require comfort or additional services.

It has become standard practice for municipalities in the Capital Region to provide mutual aid for large scale emergencies as each agency undergoes the same training and follows the same procedures. Emergency management agencies participate in regional training exercises in order to enhance cooperation. VEMA’s Evacuee Assistance volunteers respond to 15 - 20 fire or evacuation incidents annually, many of which occur in the middle of the night. VEMA volunteers activated a Reception Centre to assist evacuees of an apartment fire on Oak Bay Avenue just last week.

To coincide with Emergency Preparedness Week, VEMA will launch its new *Prepare Your Pet Recipe for Disaster*, complementing its existing *Prepare at Home* and *Prepare at Work* recipes. The series is designed to help prepare a family or small business with the knowledge, supplies and a plan to cope for a minimum of three days in the event of an emergency.

Recipe for Disaster Tips will also be featured in a local Victoria newspaper from Tuesday to Saturday next week. The public is invited to email a helpful emergency preparedness tip to vema@victoria.ca for a chance to win one of three 72-hour emergency kits. The contest will close May 31, 2010.

The Victoria Emergency Management Agency is the community's resource for emergency preparedness. For more information, visit: PrepareVictoria.ca

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