



August 17, 2004

To: ESS Directors, Co-Directors and Alternates  
Mobile Support Team Members  
MHR Regional Executive Directors  
MHR Regional ESS Coordinators  
ESS Support Organizations  
ESSA Regional Representatives  
Volunteer ESS Regional Trainers  
PEP Regional Managers  
Inter-Provincial ESS Directors

**Re: ESS Program Office Update**

*Written/compiled by Maggie Grant*

Several ESS Program Office initiatives have reached completion in recent weeks, and we want to take this opportunity to share our good news. As always, we ask that you share the contents of this letter with others in your organization, and particularly with ESS team members.

This edition of the ESS Program Office Update includes the following topics:

- a) **ESS Academy**
- b) **New BCERMS Reception Centre Model**
- c) **ESS Website Update**
- d) **Worker Care Committee**
  - i) **Maximizing Stress Resilience Manual and Guide**
  - ii) **Self-Assessment: Prior to Disaster Assignment**
  - iii) **Other Tools**
- e) **Reception Centre Banner**
- f) **Emergency Preparedness Conference Draw**

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**a) ESS Academy**

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, the Minister of Human Resources, Stan Hagen, officially announced the opening of the Emergency Social Services Academy at the Justice Institute of BC – the only institution of its kind in Canada. The establishment of a dedicated ESS Academy will provide a solid base for growth of the ESS Training Program, and will raise the profile of the program within the emergency management community.

Sally Pollock, and the students of the first ESS Director course held under the new Academy, treated Minister Hagen to a Reception Centre exercise as part of the activities surrounding the announcement. They did a fantastic job, and their efforts were very much appreciated. The Minister was an active participant during the demonstration, and enjoyed learning more about the hands-on operation of a Reception Centre.

Following this interactive exercise, a ceremony was held in the auditorium for the unveiling of the ESS Academy plaque. In addition to Minister Hagen, the speakers included Peter Pershick, the retiring Director of Emergency Management Division at the JI, Jack McGee, President of the JI, and Gord Davis, a participant in the ESS Director course.

Gord is one of many volunteers from the Kamloops area who came on board during last year's wildfires. Having retired as principal from a school in Barriere the day before the fires started, he felt compelled to help the community and reported to the Reception Centre in Kamloops to offer his services. Volunteers like Gord exemplify the spirit of ESS, and we were honored to have him represent the ESS community at this event.

**b) New BCERMS Reception Centre Model**

All ESS Directors should have now received a copy of the new ESS Reception Centre Operational Guidelines, outlining a new BCERMS model for ESS responses. In the last issue of the Update Letter we advised you of a promotional offer of a set of six vests in the BCERMS colors (one each of red, blue, orange, grey, yellow and green). We have now started to distribute these vests on a one-time only, first-come, first-served basis, to communities that have indicated their intention to adopt the new Reception Centre model. To request a set for your ESS team, you may contact the Program Office at 1-800-585-9559.

To further assist communities in learning about the new BCERMS model for ESS, we have Colleen Vaughan from the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) available to provide a small orientation presentation. To arrange a session for your community, or to possibly attend a presentation in a location near you, please contact the JIBC Emergency Social Services Academy at (604) 528-5790. Please note: There is no obligation to have an orientation session before a team can contact us for a set of vests.

**c) ESS Website Update**

Redevelopment of the ESS website is now complete. There will be a few additions in the coming months, but the site is now current and ready for use. Included on the new site is a downloadable version of the new *Reception Centre Operational Guidelines*. Please take time to reacquaint yourself with the site at [www.ess.bc.ca](http://www.ess.bc.ca), and be sure to send us your feedback.

**d) Worker Care Committee**

The Worker Care Committee, which originated as a sub-committee of the ESS Advisory Committee, has completed the first phase of their project. The screening tools described below are intended for use by any organization, agency or business that is recruiting volunteers or staff for disaster assignments. These tools are designed to assist in determining the ability of new recruits to cope during an emergency or disaster, and will be available on the ESS website in the near future.

**i. Maximizing Stress Resilience Manual and Guide**

This manual includes a series of questions to be used as a screening interview to help determine the personal suitability of potential disaster workers. The manual is to be made available to the candidate prior to the interview so they may review the interview questions and complete the recommended reading: “Trauma and Disaster Work: A Self-Assessment” and “Your Health and Disasters”.

A companion document, Guide for Maximizing Stress Resilience, provides guidance for the interviewer in assessing the candidate’s responses. A template for analyzing the interview results is also available. The guide must be kept confidential and will not be available online. It may be obtained, on written request only, by ESS Directors or senior representatives of other recognized organizations. Fax requests to the ESS Program Office at 250-356-9129.

**ii. Self-Assessment: Prior to Disaster Assignment**

This tool is intended for use by emergency responders -- volunteer or staff -- who have been called out to respond to a disaster. Self-assessment should be completed prior to accepting any disaster assignment, as individual circumstances change on a regular basis and can affect a person’s resilience to stress. The self-assessment tool will help responders make well-considered decisions regarding whether or not they should accept a disaster assignment.

**iii. Other Tools**

Other tools currently under development will be made available as soon as possible:

- pocket card containing worker care reminders
- poster promoting worker care for the use of emergency response organizations
- recommendations for a worker care coordinator

**f) Reception Centre Banner**

Courtesy of the ESS Program Office, new Reception Centre banners were mailed out in late April to every ESS Director in our database. If your ESS team did not receive a banner, please contact our office at 1-800-585-9559 to make your request and confirm your mailing address.

**g) Emergency Preparedness Conference Draw**

On August 11<sup>th</sup> the draw for Emergency Preparedness Conference packages was made at the ESS Program Office. The lucky winners are:

**Vancouver Island Region 1**

Lorna Curtis  
Natalie Schlogl

**Southwest Region 2**

Rocio Andrews  
Carolyn Ericson

**Central Region 3**

Sally Dawe  
Earl Driver

**Southeast Region 4**

Dave Saunders  
Charyl Wilson

**Northeast Region 5**

Dave Dickson  
Nicole Robson-Solomon

**Northwest Region 6**

Danielle Dalton  
Debora Chatfield

We congratulate the winners, but recognize that each and every person who entered this draw deserved to win. We are very proud of the work that we see going on in ESS teams around the province to improve the effectiveness and visibility of ESS, and are pleased to be able to offer our support through these new initiatives and tools. Thank you, once again, for your dedication.

Sincerely,

Jeff Cornell  
Director  
Emergency Social Services

Attachments

pc: Rob Fraser, Executive Director