

Emergency Response Training in the Heartland

June 2012

Effective emergency response in industrial regions like Alberta's Industrial Heartland is extremely important. Industry and the local community rely on emergency responders to be prepared and capable to perform their duties in a variety of scenarios.

Effective emergency response is a result of countless hours of preparation. Planning, training, testing, improving, and testing again help build a comprehensive plan that maximizes response capability and minimizes impact to people, property, and the environment.

In Alberta's Industrial Heartland, Northeast Region CAER is the organization responsible for coordinating responders from industries, the municipalities, and government agencies. Their mutual aid emergency response plan helps ensure quality emergency response in the region.

Part of the region's emergency response plan is a detailed training component. Emergency response exercises are conducted on a regular basis to uncover areas for improvement before an actual emergency.

Training exercises in the Heartland occur within individual agencies such as a municipal fire department or an industrial company's emergency response unit. They also occur as a group, in which multiple agencies are brought together and equipment and resources are mobilized as they would be in a real emergency situation. A scenario is developed and inputs, such as power outage or fire, are added at certain times to escalate an event. The objective is to test the emergency response plan until it breaks, which creates opportunities for improvements. Training exercises are followed by an extensive debrief session to evaluate and enhance future performance.

Emergency response training in the Heartland has been ongoing for years and included a variety of scenarios – ice storm with power and phone outage, explosion with airborne release of a hazardous substance, mass-casualty traffic incidents involving hazardous substance (tanker truck roll over), rail car derailment with hazardous substance release, pipeline breach from third party excavation, and security threat.

These scenarios not only hone the responders' skills and capabilities, but they also strengthen relationships among responders. Knowing one another before an incident and regularly sharing best practices enhances the entire emergency response network in the Heartland.

*Brought to you by **Life in the Heartland**, a partnership aimed at improving access to information, resources, and contacts for residents in and around Alberta's Industrial Heartland. For more information, visit www.lifeintheheartland.com, email info@lifeintheheartland.com or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/LifeintheHeartland.*