

Community Notification Plan wins recognition

The **Community Notification Plan** used by Northeast Region Community Awareness Emergency Response (NR CAER) recently beat out 45 other submissions from across Alberta and won Honourable Mention for the Innovation Award as part of the 2003 *Municipal Excellence Awards*.

The Community Notification Plan was started this past spring and has two main functions. The Update Line (1-866-653-9959) features a recorded message that enables callers to hear about any activities being performed by industry. Typically, these are non-emergency incidents and pose no threat to the public. The second component is the call out. Should an emergency occur, a phone call can be placed simultaneously to any number of residents to notify them of the incident and provide valuable instructions.

Northeast Region CAER consists of more than 40 municipalities and industries. Municipal members include the City of Fort Saskatchewan; Sturgeon, Strathcona and Lamont Counties; and the towns of Bruderheim, Gibbons, Morinville and Redwater.

Ottawa improves fire dispatch system

The Mayor of Ottawa recently announced the City's latest investment in fire and emergency protection for residents with the launch of a new fire computer aided dispatch (CAD) system, which includes station alerting, paging and other components.

The new CAD system from Versaterm enhances sharing of information and IT support between Fire and Police services. The dispatch system is scaled to handle the large number of emergency calls that the City deals with. It also enables exchange of support information with Police Dispatch.

The system allows dispatchers to identify and define the type of emergency call received, identify the location of the incident, as well as automatically screen the location and caller's name. The computer aided dispatch system will also automatically alert the required station for emergency fire response or page volunteer firefighters servicing an area in which there is a fire outbreak.

The CAD system, which was selected and tested by Ottawa Fire Services staff, is now in full operation across the city.

Cold weather advantage

Dealing with wastewater treatment in a cold climate is challenging, but the Council of Swift Current, Saskatchewan has found the perfect solution. The City is in the first of a three-stage project to treat 500,000m³ of wastewater per year.

The treatment, called 'Atomizing Freeze Crystallization EVC[®]', is a unique, economically advanced treatment process specifically designed for cold climates. It treats wastewater by freezing it into small ice crystals. The ice crystal structure rejects impurities, allowing separation of contaminants from the clean water, producing superior results at a low cost. It uses no chemicals, is natural in concept, and incorporates the use of standard equipment and construction techniques.

Swift Current's plant is the first 'decantation' type plant due to local clay soils, and solves the problem the City had of releasing secondary treated effluent into a nearby low-flow stream. The very high quality of this treatment concept has alleviated the problem.

The economics of using this process benefits both the client's capital and operating budgets. Weather plays a major role in defining the size of the EVC[®] plant. The colder the weather, the smaller the EVC[®] plant required. Stand-alone EVC[®] plants are about 50% of the cost of secondary treatment systems and 20-30% of similar sized tertiary plants.

History-making lights

The City of Trois-Rivières in Quebec, recently made history by converting their streetlights from traditional High Pressure Sodium to the pioneering 'white light' system. This installation, the largest of its kind in the world, began in the summer of 2002 and will take over three years as more than 13,000 systems are installed. The new lamps will improve the night time look of Trois-Rivières, while saving energy, drastically reducing maintenance costs, increasing safety and benefiting the environment.

The innovative lighting system is based on a technology that is fundamentally different from that of incandescent lamps or today's conventional gas discharge lamps. This technology combines the basic principles of induction and gas discharge to create a light bulb with no filament or electrodes.

This innovation results in a lamp of unmatched durability and an unprecedented life. Rated at 100,000 hours or 25 years (based on operation at 4,000 hours per year), the lights offer five-to-ten times the life of traditional systems for only two-to-three times the cost of traditional solutions. The initial cost will be recouped several times over during the lifetime of the lamp in terms of the savings in energy and maintenance.

As well, these lamps provide a much higher quality of light than High-Pressure Sodium lamps. The lights will change from orange light to crisp white light, and a switch from low to high colour rendering, allowing for greater safety and improved visibility.

Phoenix Model delivers

The Phoenix Model of municipal service delivery is a public-private competition concept first introduced by **Ronald Jensen** for the City of Phoenix in Arizona. Under managed competition, a public agency competes with private sector firms to provide public agency functions and services. Managed competition attempts to create a 'level playing field' between the public and private sectors to select the most cost effective method of delivering public services.

The City of Phoenix became involved in a privatization effort in 1978 that evolved into a formal process of comparing bids from private firms with the City's costs in a bid format. The City of Phoenix was

successful in developing a process of public-private competitive bidding that achieved a high level of credibility. In a 10-year period between 1978 and 1988, the competitive process saved the city in over \$25 million. Initially, the city lost one-half of the solid waste program to private firms, but by 1988, the city had won back all contracts and returned to 100% city provided residential solid waste collection services.

Public agencies have developed different approaches to the process of

managed competition. In some cases, the public agency bid is prepared by public employee labour unions or employee associations, without direct involvement of management. In others, management prepares the public agency bid without the involvement or support of employees or organized labour.

Managed Competition can provide the public agency's customers with the "highest level of services at the least possible cost." ●