

## **Heartland 101: Environmental Emergency Response Plans**

*October 2016*

Risk assessment, response plans and access to resources are elements of industry and community emergency management programs. Confirming and improving these plans through drills, exercises and simulations not only enhances public safety, it also satisfies certain regulatory requirements.

A number of industrial facilities in the region are required to have Environmental Emergency, or E2, Response plans under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. These plans aim to reduce the frequency and severity of uncontrolled, unplanned or accidental releases of hazardous substances into the environment. They also ensure companies are able to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from an environmental emergency.

### **E2 Plans Put to the Test**

Regulations require E2 plans to be updated and tested at least once each calendar year. Tests and exercises simulate a possible emergency that can reasonably be expected to occur at the facility, and includes informing those affected that a test is being planned. This enables responders and participants to be involved in the planning and confirms response roles.

Exercises can be administrative, discussion-based, or operational, which entails actual deployment of response equipment and personnel. Facilities are able to participate in mutual aid exercises or in exercises run by industry associations, as long as the exercises include their sites and test their specific E2 plan.

### **Recent Emergency Exercise at Sherritt**

On October 6<sup>th</sup>, Sherritt tested their E2 plan with an operational exercise, and included their mutual aid partners through Northeast Region Community Awareness Emergency Response ([NRCAER](#)). “In our twenty-five years, NRCAER member exercises have involved a range of scenarios to meet various federal and provincial regulatory requirements, and test our mutual aid protocols at the same time,” says Brenda Gheran with NRCAER. “Severe weather, transportation incidents, human intentional and non-intentional actions can potentially lead to environmental emergencies. Exercising response plans ensures all responding agencies have a shared understanding of a safe and effective response.”

### **Public Safety**

If an environmental emergency occurs, the public safety response is to **Shelter in Place** by going inside, shutting doors and windows and turning off anything that draws outdoor air inside. This creates a barrier between people and the hazard. NRCAER has a number of Shelter in Place education tools, such as magnets and information cards, and also [Youtube videos](#).

### **Connect with NRCAER**

NRCAER will be among 20 organizations participating at Life in the Heartland’s next Community Information Evening on October 20 at the Gibbons Cultural Centre from 5 – 8 pm. Join us to hear about past projects and future initiatives. RSVP to [info@lifeintheheartland.com](mailto:info@lifeintheheartland.com) or 780.231.9802 (call or text).

For more information about Life in the Heartland, visit [lifeintheheartland.com](http://lifeintheheartland.com), follow us on Twitter and Facebook, or email [info@lifeintheheartland.com](mailto:info@lifeintheheartland.com).

---

*Heartland 101 is a monthly print and on-air (Mix 107.9 FM) series brought to you by **Life in the Heartland**, a partnership of five local organizations improving access to information, resources, and contacts for communities in and around Alberta’s Industrial Heartland.*