



Kelowna EOC-Firestorm 2003. Photo: Terry, VE7TDR.

More than 60 Amateur Radio Operators contributed 2236 hours of service to the Okanagan Mountain Fire effort. The Amateurs who participated (not previously mentioned) included: Al, VA7ALB, Bentley, VA7BTY, Don, VA7DAD, Don, VA7DON, Hu VA7HR, Lloyd, VA7JTQ, Brian, VA7LBP, Lee VA7LEE, Mike, VA7ML, Travis, VA7PAL, Stephen, VA7SCH, Stephen, VA7STV, Walt, VA7WLT, Vern, VA7ABK, Alan, VA7ALN, Bob, VE7AMY, Bill, VE7ANQ, Bruce, VE7ATB, Ian, VE7BST, Joe, VE7CRJ, Dan, VE7DJJ, Eric, VE7DMH, Blake, VE7DO, Alex, VE7EIS, Ed, VE7EWS, Vince, VE7GEI, Gerry, VE7GER, David, VE7HOL, Ryan, VE7JPS, Fred, VE7KBB, Jim, VE7KDN, Keith, VE7KNG, Barry,

VE7KNK, Rolly, VE7LMB, Lowell, VE7LRL, Mike, VE7MMG, Mike, VE7MVF, Mike, VE7OMS, John, VE7ONX, Leona, VE7ONY, Mabel, VE7OSD, Orison, VE7OSW, Grant, VE7RGB, Jim, VE7RJ, Rob, VE7RPL, John, VE7RUM, Keith, VE7SND, Ethann, VE7SYG, Paul, VE7TKC, Bill, VE7VTC, Geoff, VE7WAT, Travis, VE7TRB (Vancouver area relief operators): Paulette, VE7VPE, Rod, VE7IRL, Heather, VE7WTX, Jim, VE7FO, Wren, VE7WCS, Tank, VA7TLK, Barry, VE7BWH, Terry, VE7TDR, Brian, VE7JKZ, Brenda, VA7CCF, Rolland, VA7UZ, and Randy, VE7RNG.

I also want to mention the excellent support received from Cam Filmer, Aja, VA7QV

and AJ, VE7KSN at PEP HQ in Victoria, Rod Salem, PEP Central Okanagan Regional Manager, and Ken, VE7EFL and his Amateur Radio Ops at the Kamloops Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centre (PREOC), especially for their help in obtaining the three-day excellent relief support from 12 Vancouver, BC area Amateur Radio Operators.

Thanks to Garry, VE5PNQ, ARES EC Saskatoon, who kept the Kelowna EOC webpage up-to-date for a few days. He offered the services of his ARES team if needed in Kelowna. Other out-of-province groups offered to come to our assistance if needed. All of these offers were noted and appreciated.

It was also great to receive encouragement during the crisis from RAC personnel, such as the National Executive, Fred, VE7IO, RAC BC Section Manager and Andy, VA3SMM, TCA columnist. I also received direct email encouragement from ARRL QST Senior News Editor, Rick, N1RL.

I am proud of the Public Service Commendation that I received from RAC. Although I realize that it is probably not practical, I feel that every Amateur who served during this past summer's terrible wildfires has earned the same recognition. As the Emergency Communications Coordinator for Central Okanagan, I have accepted



the certificate, partly, as symbolic of the efforts of all these other ham operators.

Note: An EOC Communications Coordinator is usually also known as the Municipal Emergency Communications Coordinator (MECC) or Municipal Amateur Radio Coordinator (MAC) in the BC Provincial Emergency Program (PEP). The Provincial Emergency Radio Communications Service (PERCS), a PEP affiliate, acts similar to ARES in BC, and operates under ARES principles by Letter Of Understanding with RAC. There are also some ARES units in BC under the leadership of SEC Bob, VE7KW, in Burnaby that act in concert with the PEP Program.

As I look back, it was a surreal scene, the city and its residents trying to carry on with normal activities while surrounded by choking smoke, falling ash, thumping helicopters with water buckets and water bombers thundering low overhead.

One unbelievable scene that I shall always remember is from my drive home south on Highway 97 to Westbank in the middle of the night, from a tour of duty at the Kelowna EOC. It was very quiet with no traffic. About one kilometre away, across Okanagan Lake, the entire 11 kilometres of mountainside along the lake, between Kelowna and Westbank, was ablaze with flames exploding high into the air, ash was falling on the car, there was an eerie red glow to the sky and the reflection covered the entire width of the lake. It was an extremely sad sight, one that I hope I never see again.

Meanwhile, we will continue to Plan, Prepare and Practice.

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