

2019 Annual Report

Office of the
Fire Marshal



Government of
Northwest Territories



2019 ANNUAL REPORT

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Message from the Fire Marshal

The Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) Annual Report is an opportunity to reflect upon the status of fire safety inspections, fire prevention efforts, fire investigations and other emergency response activities of community fire departments and the OFM over the past year. Statistical data helps identify trends which highlight many of the challenges of operating fire departments in the Northwest Territories (NWT). It also informs the development of prevention programming and protection priorities for the coming year in order to protect NWT residents and property from the threat of fire.



Fire is a natural force that we invite into our homes and businesses under controlled circumstances. We heat our buildings, prepare our food and heat our water with fire. It forms an integral part of our day to day lives and provides us many benefits. However, it also demands much respect; because when it is uncontrolled it can have devastating impacts on our lives.

Uncontrolled fires can be attributed to natural hazards, equipment failure, human error, arson, and other factors that vary across NWT communities. Similar to other jurisdictions in Canada, the vast majority of loss due to fire in the NWT occurs in residential settings. The impacts of these fires can place a heavy burden on families, communities and governments due to losses which are, in many cases, quite preventable. This signifies the need for the NWT fire service and the OFM to focus and build upon community fire prevention and protection efforts. We do this through the identification of hazards and risks and educating our residents on how they can prevent fires and protect themselves in the event of fire. This is critical to reducing loss whether that be to the environment, property, injuries or loss of life.

Given the ever-evolving nature of the fire service, many communities are challenged with maintaining volunteer firefighters and a level of service to support fire protection and prevention efforts. The construction and manufacturing sectors are also evolving and expanding over time and that brings new hazards for emergency responders to consider. These have a direct bearing on the health and safety of residents and emergency responders. To combat these challenges, the firefighting industry in Canada is seeing enhanced building codes and standards, an increase in safety and training requirements, changes to industry best practices and technological advances in the fire service. This speaks to the importance of the relationship between the OFM and communities. Building local capacity and providing local support establishes a balance of all these considerations and along with the human and financial resources available to communities provides for the safety of responders and residents.

Preventing fires and the delivery of fire services in our communities would not be possible without the many career and volunteer firefighters across the NWT who are our most important and valuable resource. They sacrifice time with family and friends to educate residents in how they can protect themselves from the threat of fire. They are determined and caring individuals fully prepared to defend and protect the lives and property of all those who choose to live, work, visit and invest in the NWT. The Government of the NWT continues to recognize their efforts and residents continue to celebrate these selfless individuals for their efforts in protecting NWT communities.

Respectfully, Blair Dewar, Northwest Territories Fire Marshal

Executive Summary

The Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) continues its efforts to support community emergency services by providing guidance and supporting capacity building. Working side by side with community residents and our other partners is critical to strengthening relationships and advancing community emergency services.

OFM activities in 2019 included:

- Ongoing community fire department assessments to identify critical resource needs and safety gaps;
- Support for community fire protection and prevention action plan development;
- Collaboration with key stakeholders in the development of an action plan with priority activities to establish a territorial support system for ground ambulance and highway rescue services; and
- Continued work on updating the *Fire Prevention Act* and *Regulations*.

In 2019, OFM statistics are near average when compared to the five-year trend.

- There were 238 reported fires in the NWT;
 - 32 of which required investigation,
 - The resulting dollar loss was \$3.618 million, a decrease of 36% from the previous year.
- A total of 561 fire safety inspections were completed by community and OFM fire officials.
- A total of 107 firefighters received training through Municipal and Community Affairs' (MACA) School of Community Government (SCG) in various emergency response skill set areas.

Observations include:

- A need for the OFM to continue working closely with community governments, fire service personnel, and residents to bring a greater awareness to available fire protection programming and support services;
- Assist communities with understanding their fire training needs, and the development of training curriculums that are achievable and support capacity building; and
- Provide flexibility across regions in how the OFM meets its regulatory obligations related to fire inspections.

The OFM focuses its efforts to ensure residents are well informed of fire risk, strengthening community fire service capacity, ensure buildings meet fire safety requirements, and recognize firefighter contributions to the NWT fire service.

These activities include:

- Work with communities in the development of local fire prevention education programs aimed at raising awareness and managing risks;
- Communicating public fire safety messaging to residents through various media forms stemming from fire investigations;

- Training initiatives to ensure community access to accredited and non-accredited fire training through a variety of delivery methods;
- Plan review activities on construction projects to ensure owners, contractors, professionals and developers are meeting the requirements of the Fire Prevention Act and adopted codes and standards;
- Conducting fire safety inspections to assist building owners and communities with meeting territorial safety requirements;
- Fire Service Merit Awards to provide recognition of individuals and fire departments for merit and long service; and
- Support for the Exemplary Fire Service Medal program offered through the Office of the Governor General of Canada. The Fire Marshal chairs the Territorial awards committee to recognize exemplary fire service contributions by fire officials.

Sommaire

Le Bureau du commissaire aux incendies (ci-après le Bureau) poursuit ses efforts pour soutenir les services d'urgence communautaires en fournissant de l'orientation et en appuyant le renforcement des capacités. Il est essentiel de travailler de concert avec les résidents et nos partenaires pour renforcer les relations et améliorer les services d'urgence communautaires.

Parmi les activités du Bureau en 2019, mentionnons :

- L'évaluation continue des services d'incendie communautaires afin d'y cerner tout besoin en ressources essentielles et toute lacune en matière de sécurité;
- Le soutien à l'élaboration de plans d'action communautaires de prévention et de protection contre les incendies;
- La collaboration avec des intervenants clés pour rédiger un plan d'action qui comporte des mesures prioritaires pour établir un système territorial de soutien des services d'ambulances terrestres et de secours routiers;
- La poursuite de la mise à jour de la *Loi sur la prévention des incendies* et de ses règlements.

En 2019, les statistiques du Bureau s'approchent de la moyenne lorsque l'on effectue une comparaison sur cinq ans.

- Il y a eu 238 incendies signalés aux TNO;
 - 32 d'entre eux ont nécessité une enquête;
 - Les pertes enregistrées se sont établies à 3,618 millions \$, soit une diminution de 36 % par rapport à l'année précédente.
- En tout, 561 inspections de sécurité incendie ont été réalisées par les services d'incendie locaux et le Bureau pendant l'année.
- Au total, 107 pompiers ont reçu de la formation offerte par l'École de gestion communautaire du ministère des Affaires municipales et communautaires (MAMC) dans plusieurs domaines des interventions d'urgence.

Mentionnons certains points à améliorer :

- Le Bureau doit travailler en étroite collaboration avec le personnel des services d'incendie communautaires et les Ténos afin d'accroître la sensibilisation aux programmes de prévention des incendies et aux services de soutien existants;
- Le Bureau doit aider les collectivités à comprendre leurs besoins en formation sur la lutte contre les incendies, et à mettre sur pied des programmes de formation réalistes qui permettent de renforcer leurs capacités dans le domaine;
- Le Bureau doit faire preuve de souplesse dans sa façon d'appliquer les exigences réglementaires sur les inspections de sécurité incendie selon les différentes régions.

Le Bureau déploie tous les efforts pour s'assurer que les résidents sont bien informés des risques d'incendie, pour renforcer la capacité des services d'incendie communautaires, veiller à ce que les bâtiments répondent aux exigences de sécurité incendie, et souligner le dévouement des pompiers à l'égard des services d'incendie des TNO.

Ces activités comprennent :

- Travailler avec les collectivités pour élaborer des programmes d'information locaux sur la prévention des incendies axés sur la sensibilisation et la gestion des risques.
- Communiquer des messages de sécurité incendie aux résidents par l'intermédiaire des médias à la suite d'enquêtes sur les incendies;
- Proposer des initiatives pour assurer un accès à des formations en lutte contre les incendies accréditées ou non par l'entremise de différentes méthodes;
- Planifier l'examen des projets de construction pour s'assurer que les propriétaires, les entrepreneurs, les professionnels et les promoteurs respectent les exigences de la *Loi sur la prévention des incendies* et des codes et normes en vigueur;
- Effectuer des inspections de sécurité incendie pour aider les propriétaires de bâtiments et les collectivités à respecter les exigences territoriales de sécurité;
- Remettre Les prix d'excellence des services d'incendie pour souligner l'excellence et les états de services des services d'incendie et de leurs membres.
- Appuyer le programme de Médaille des pompiers pour services distingués, administré par le Bureau du gouverneur général du Canada. Le commissaire des incendies préside le comité territorial qui s'occupe de l'attribution des médailles qui soulignent le service exemplaire des pompiers.

Office of the Fire Marshal

Mandate

To work with partners to enhance the delivery of emergency services and minimize loss, including the environment, property, injury, or loss of life. This is accomplished through ensuring compliance with legislation, applicable standards, best practices, prevention programming, public awareness and investigation into the cause and origin of fire.

Duties and Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the OFM are established in the NWT *Fire Prevention Act* which requires the OFM to perform the following duties:

- Keep a record of fires reported;
- Disseminate information and advice about fire prevention and fire protection by means of public meetings, press articles, exhibitions, radio, television or other publicity campaigns;
- Review plans for the construction, alteration, and repair of structures for compliance with adopted codes and standards. Determining that proper precautions are taken against fire and the spread of fire;
- Conduct fire prevention inspections from time to time to determine if precautions against fire and the spread of fire are adequate and satisfactorily maintained;
- Conduct fire investigations to determine the cause, origin, and circumstances of fires;
- Contribute to the development of community fire departments through identification of training programs, courses and providing guidance on meeting industry standards and best practices;
- Submit an annual report to the Minister setting out: the causes and origins of fires, information on fatalities or injuries inflicted by fire, investigations and any necessary inquiries of fires, prosecutions for arson or attempted arson, a summary of OFM administration of fire prevention and community fire protection activity, together with any other information that the Minister may request; and
- Advise and make recommendations to the Minister with respect to:
 - The establishment of fire departments, the necessary organization and equipment of fire departments and the establishment of training programs for firefighters;
 - The provision of adequate water supply for fire-fighting purposes;
 - The installation and maintenance of fire-alarm systems and fire extinguishing equipment;
 - The storage, use, sale or disposal of combustibles, explosives or other flammable material;
 - The construction and maintenance of fire-escapes and other exit facilities in the event of fire or the alarm of fire; and
 - The types and adequacy of fire-alarms in communities and, in or on any building or property.

Staff

In 2019, the OFM consisted of eight staff members who filled the following positions:

- Fire Marshal
- Chief Code Compliance Engineer (plan review)
- Senior Policy Advisor
- Assistant Fire Marshal, Sahtu Region
- Assistant Fire Marshal, Beaufort Delta Region
- Assistant Fire Marshal, North Slave Region
- Assistant Fire Marshal, Deh Cho Region
- Assistant Fire Marshal, South Slave Region

Partnerships

The OFM works with a variety of organizations and partner groups on issues associated with fire safety. They are as follows:

- Community Governments and local fire officials
- Northwest Territories Fire Chief's Association (NWTFCFA)
- NWT Association of Communities (NWTAC)
- Local Government Administrators of the NWT (LGANT)
- Workers Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC)
- Council of Canadian Fire Marshal and Fire Commissioners (CCFMFC)
- Canadian Fire Safety Advisory Council (CFSAC)
- Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes (CCBFC)
- National Research Council of Canada (NRCC)
- Provincial / Territorial Policy Advisory Committee on Codes (PTPACC)
- Fire and Life Safety Public Education Network (Canada)
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)

Current Initiatives

Supporting Community Governments

In 2017, the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) completed a Performance Audit of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) focusing on areas involving health and safety. Stemming from this work, 13 recommendations were made by the OAG for MACA to improve support for community governments, including immediate actions to reassess whether communities with fire departments meet requirements under the *Safety Act*. For those fire departments that do not, MACA will work with community governments to establish a plan to assist them in meeting requirements. For community governments without fire departments, the Department will work with them to develop a strategy for fire safety.

In response to the OAG's recommendations, the OFM implemented tools and actions in 2017 to strengthen community fire protection services for NWT communities including a community fire protection presentation to educate municipal governments on roles, responsibilities, and key elements of their fire service. The OFM also implemented: a community fire department assessment to provide an efficient means to determine the operational status and resource needs of fire departments; and an action planning tool to help community governments identify priority activities and monitor progress. A key benchmark for the assessment is the WSCC's Firefighter Code of Practice.

As of December 2019, twenty-three (23) community fire departments have been reviewed, and community action plans have been developed for fourteen (14). Results from the assessments indicate a need for updated bylaws, volunteer recruitment and training, standard operating procedures and maintenance programs. The OFM created templates for communities to ensure these important foundational elements are implemented and maintained to meet safety requirements.

Community Fire Protection

In 2019, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs continued working with community members and local officials in its role to support and guide community fire protection efforts in the NWT. In addition, the following tools have been created to assist communities in understanding fire service components, meet safety requirements, outline best practices and manage fire safety risks:

- An online central resource site with fire safety and other guidance information for community governments, fire departments, and NWT residents.
- A community fire protection presentation to help educate elected officials on roles, responsibilities, and key elements of the fire service;
- A Firefighter Code of Practice which provides practical guidance to achieve the safety requirements of the NWT and Nunavut Safety Acts and related Regulations;
- A fire department assessment tool;
- A fire protection action planning tool and guide;
- A community fire protection bylaw template;
- A standard equipment guide;
- A volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention toolkit;
- A scene safety and security course for communities with limited response capability;
- An annual fire prevention week campaign program;

- An information campaign to warn the public about the risks of carbon monoxide poisoning; and
- A derelict building management tool.

Ground Ambulance and Highway Rescue Services

Municipal legislation allows communities to establish and provide ground ambulance and highway rescue (GAHR) services, to set reasonable rates or fees and to extend emergency services outside of municipal boundaries. The management and delivery of GAHR services in the NWT is challenging for a variety of reasons: extensive areas of coverage, limited qualified volunteers, cost recovery challenges, and a lack of standardization which can impact the effectiveness and efficiency of these services.

The GNWT supports community based GAHR services through financial and training support. An inter-departmental GAHR committee was formed to improve GNWT support for the development and maintenance of an appropriate system of GAHR services in the NWT. Considerable research and stakeholder consultation occurred in 2018 that was used as the basis for developing an action plan. In July 2019, MACA provided community governments and key stakeholders with a briefing on the action plan.

Priorities identified moving forward include determining appropriate service delivery standards and a revised funding model to support mechanisms for cost recovery and other resources for those who provide the services. While work continues, the GNWT has maintained a small budget to help offset training and other costs to communities who deliver mature services beyond municipal boundaries.

Fire Prevention Act Review – Update

In 2017, MACA sought public consultation on desired changes and internal efforts to update the *Fire Prevention Act* (Act) and regulations. Through this process, it was recognized that considerable attention on key provisions in the legislation involving building code compliance was required. Further consideration was deferred to the 19th Legislative Assembly.

Section 5 of the Act serves to verify that construction plans and specifications comply with adopted codes and standards. Stakeholders have further confirmed a desire to discuss the current approach with a view to adequately balancing infrastructure development with public safety. MACA anticipates the scope of future work will consider other related inspection, permitting, and code-compliance activities administered by municipal authorities and GNWT infrastructure departments. An integrated approach for code compliance is common throughout other jurisdictions in Canada and will be considered within the NWT context.

Regional Statistical Summaries

Statistical summaries from across the Territory relating to fire occurrences, false alarms, fire investigations and fire inspections help our understanding of the cause and impact of fires. They can guide fire protection priorities for communities and the OFM to ensure the safety and security of residents. These statistics can also help identify trends, work priorities, resource requirements and fire prevention program needs.

Beaufort Delta Region

	Fires Reported	False Alarms [1]	Fire Investigations	Fire Inspections
Aklavik	1	0	0	5
Fort McPherson	1		0	5
Inuvik	8	8	8	10
Paulatuk	0	0	0	4
Sachs Harbour	0	0	0	4
Tsiigehtchic	0	0	0	4
Tuktoyaktuk	1	0	0	5
Ulukhaktok	0	0	0	5
Hinterland	1	0	1	0
Total	11	8	9 [2]	42

[1] False alarm data is typically only reported by larger communities.

[2] 7 of the 9 fire investigations reported in 2019 were completed by the Inuvik Fire Department.

List of fires that caused over \$100,000 in damage

Community	Description	Building Name	Dollar Loss
Inuvik	Single Family Residential	51 Bonnetplume Road	\$350,000
Inuvik	Commercial Industrial Shop	40 Industrial Road	\$350,000
Inuvik	Multi-Residential Row Housing Unit	39 – 109 Wolverine Road	\$150,000
Total			\$850,000

Fire Investigation Findings

Accidental	7
Natural	0
Incendiary	2
Undetermined	0
Total	9

Deh Cho Region

	Fires Reported	False Alarms [1]	Fire Investigations	Fire Inspections
Fort Liard	0	0	0	1
Fort Simpson	2	18	0	15
Jean Marie River	0	0	0	1
Nahanni Butte	0	0	0	1
Trout Lake	0	0	0	2
Wrigley	0	0	0	0
Hinterland	0	0	0	0
Total	2	18	0	20

[1] False alarm data is typically only reported by larger communities.

Fires that caused over \$100,000 in damage

There were no fires in the Deh Cho Region resulting in damage over \$100,000.

Fire Investigation Findings

There were no fire investigations conducted in the Deh Cho Region for this year.

North Slave Region

	Fires Reported	False Alarms	Fire Investigations	Fire Inspections
Dettah	1	0	0	0
Behchokö	30	15	5	3
Gamètì	0	1	0	1
Łutsel K'e	0	0	0	0
N'Dilo	1	1	0	2
Wekweètì	0	0	0	0
Whatì	0	0	0	2
Yellowknife	150	241	8	305 ^[1]
Hinterland	3	0	2	1
Total	185	258	15	314

[1] 146 of the 305 inspections listed in Yellowknife were conducted by the OFM. The remaining 159 were conducted by the Yellowknife Fire Department.

List of fires that caused over \$100,000 in damage

Community	Description	Building Name	Dollar Loss
Behchokö	Single Family Residential	299 Wanazah Tili	\$533,000
Yellowknife	Single Family Residential	1 Larocque Crescent	\$380,000
Yellowknife	Single Family Houseboat	Houseboat - Yellowknife Bay	\$100,000
Yellowknife	Single Family Residential	104 Drybones Drive	\$250,000
Yellowknife	Single Family Residential	3509 Ingram Drive	\$281,000
Behchokö	Single Family Residential	10 Sindi-Di Tili	\$624,750
Yellowknife	Single Family Residential	5001 52 nd Ave Unit 107	\$200,000
Prelude Lake	Single Family Residential	3 Prelude Lake West	\$100,000
Yellowknife	Single Family Residential	906 Finlayson Court	\$300,000
Total			\$2,768,750

Fire Investigation Findings

Accidental	5
Natural	0
Incendiary	2
Undetermined	8
Total	15

Sahtu Region

	Fires Reported	False Alarms^[1]	Fire Investigations	Fire Inspections
Colville Lake	0	0	0	2
Déljñę	0	0	0	4
Fort Good Hope	1	0	0	4
Norman Wells	3	0	0	15
Tulita	2	0	2	3
Hinterland	0	0	0	0
Total	6	0	2	28

[1] False alarm data is typically only reported by larger communities.

List of fires that caused over \$100,000 in damage

Community	Description	Building Name	Dollar Loss
Norman Wells	Single Family Residential	#6 Franklin Road	\$500,000
Tulita	Single Family Residential	#10 Plane Lake Drive	\$800,000
Total			\$1,300,000

Fire Investigation Findings

Accidental	2
Natural	0
Incendiary	0
Undetermined	0
Total	2

South Slave Region

	Fires Reported	False Alarms^[1]	Fire Investigations	Fire Inspections
Enterprise	0	0	0	1
Fort Resolution	0	0	0	3
Fort Smith	15	26	3	38
Hay River	16	29	3	104
Fort Providence	3	2	0	11
Kát'odeeche First Nation	0	0	0	0
Kakisa	0	0	0	0
Hinterland	0	0	0	0
Total	34	57	6^[2]	157^[3]

[1] False alarm data is typically only reported by larger communities.

[2] 2 of the 6 Fire Investigations conducted in 2019 were completed by the Hay River Fire Department.

[3] 101 of the 157 inspections conducted in 2019 were completed by the Hay River Fire Department.

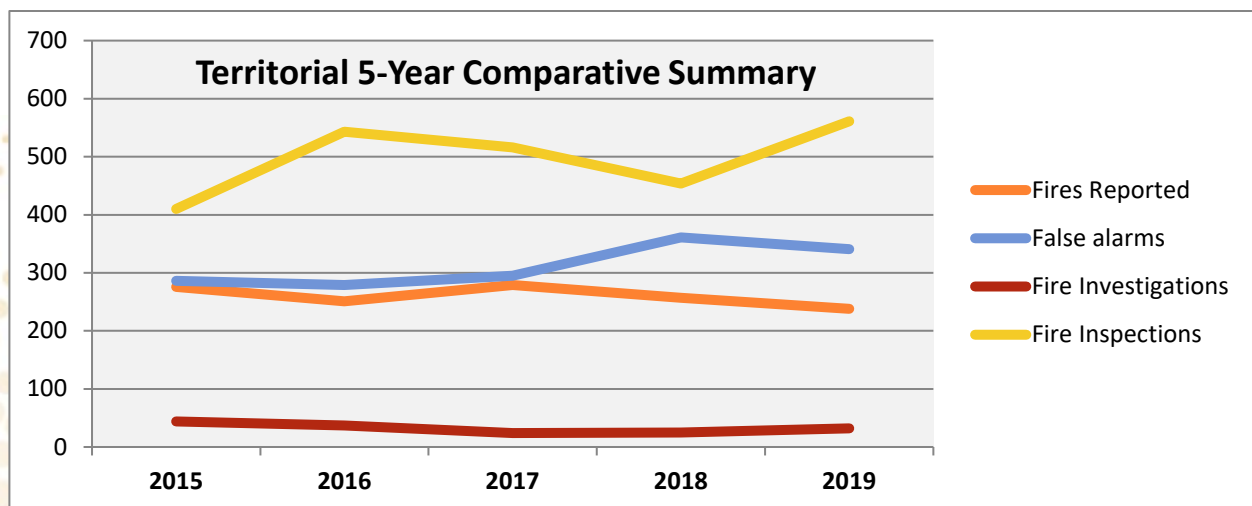
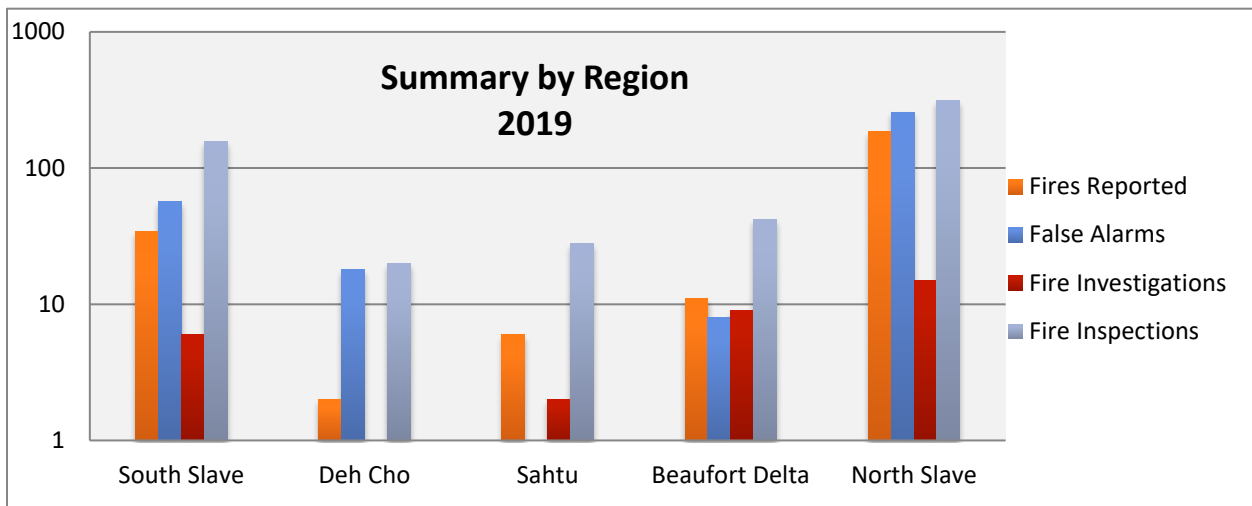
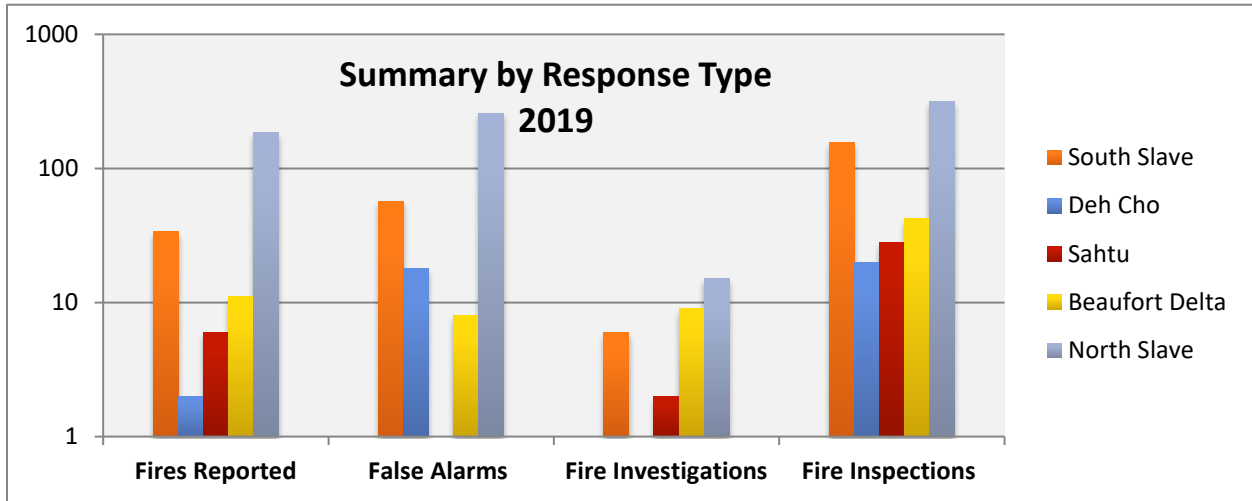
Fires that caused over \$100,000 in damage

Community	Description	Building Name	Dollar Loss
Hay River	Multi-Residential Highrise	Mackenzie Place Apartments	Dollar loss associated with the fire at the Mackenzie Place Apartments cannot be determined.

Fire Investigation Findings

Accidental	4
Natural	0
Incendiary	2
Undetermined	0
Total	6

Territorial Response Statistics



Incendiary Fire Occurrences (Arson)

An incendiary fire (Arson) is the criminal act of deliberately setting fire to property. Arson fires occur every year in the NWT and continue to be a concern to the OFM. When a fire occurs with criminal intent, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is the lead investigative agency with the OFM providing fire investigation expertise and support as needed. **In 2019, the RCMP reported 41 arson investigations; this is a 2% decrease from the previous year.** RCMP maintain independent statistics on arson related fires and provide to OFM annually. OFM is a resource to the RCMP for arson related investigations if requested.

Reported Arson Investigations

Cleared by charge / charge recommended: At least one charged/suspect chargeable (CSC) has been identified and there are charges laid against or recommended to be laid against this individual in connection with the incident.	7
Cleared Other: At least one charged / suspect chargeable (CSC) has been identified and there are sufficient grounds to lay charges, but no charges are laid.	2
Insufficient evidence to proceed: For incidents where there is insufficient or conflicting evidence for the police service to lay charges or recommend charges to the Crown.	26
Open / Still Under Investigation: For all open investigations and for those where action has yet to be taken on the reported incident.	1
Unfounded: An incident is unfounded if it has been determined through police investigation that the offence reported did not occur, nor was it attempted.	4
Victim / complainant declines to proceed (No CSC identified): For incidents where victim/complainant do not want to actively participate in the investigation and so no one is identified as charged / suspect chargeable (CSC).	1
Total	41

Injury and Cost Analysis

Injury and cost analysis help in the evaluation of fire prevention and protection efforts. Territorial losses are evaluated in comparison with losses suffered in other jurisdictions in Canada to understand the impact of program initiatives and help guide the best use of limited resources. The following is a regional and territorial summary of the 2019 population, reported losses due to fire and the cost per person that the Territory suffered as a result of fire losses including injuries suffered during fire emergencies.

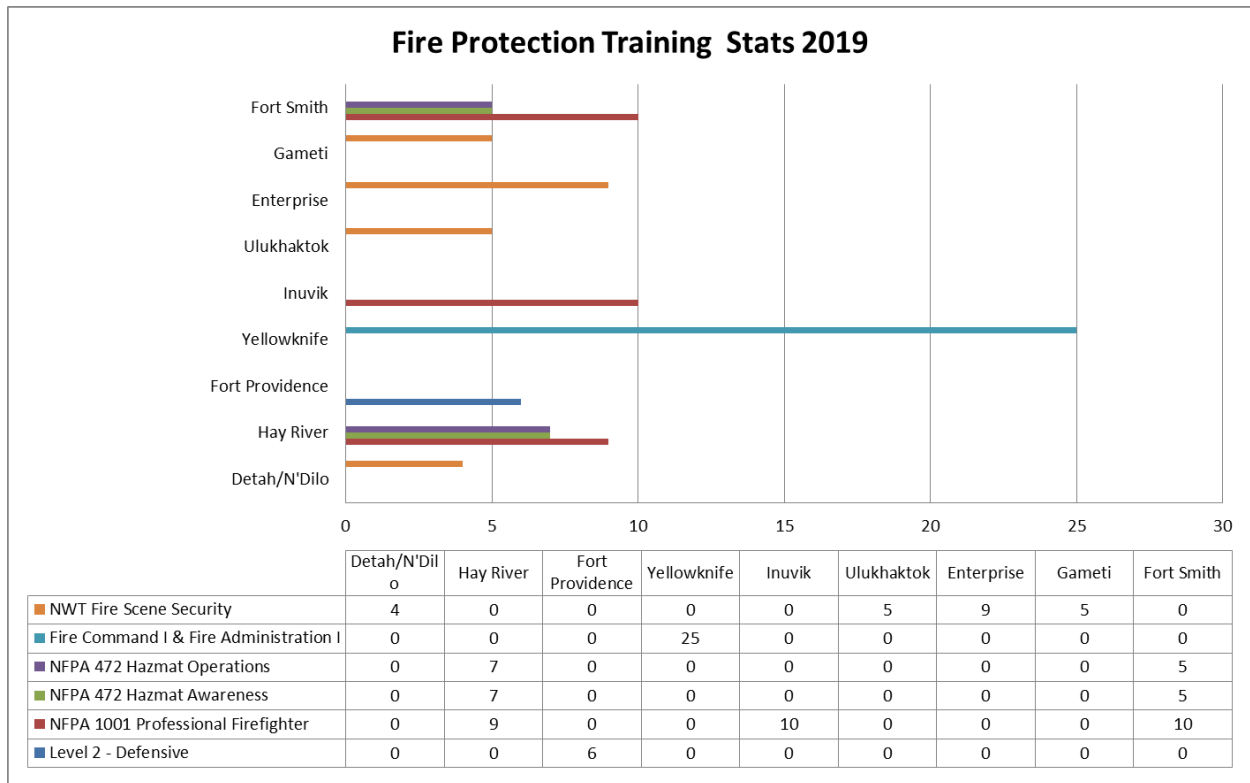
	South Slave	Deh Cho	Sahtu	Beaufort Delta	North Slave	Northwest Territories
Population	7,370	3,332	2,645	6,783	24,696	44,826
Fires Reported	34	2	6	11	185	238
Fatalities	0	0	0	0	1	1
Injuries	0	0	0	0	3	3
Dollar loss ^[1]	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$850,000	\$2,768,750	\$3,618,750
\$ loss per Capita^[2]	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$125	\$112	\$81

[1] Dollar loss statistics and loss per capita for the NWT are not an exact representation of actual given the absence of information on an uninsured high dollar loss structure fire in the South Slave region.

[2] All jurisdictions in Canada are challenged with collecting accurate statistics associated on fire losses. The NWT does not currently contribute to the National Fire Information Database due to data collection challenges.

Fire Training

The OFM continued working with MACA’s School of Community Government (SCG) to ensure community access to accredited and non-accredited fire training. The chart below identifies fire training that was provided in the NWT for 2019 by community and number of participants.



General Observations

The total number of fires reported in the NWT in 2019 was 238 compared to 256 in 2018. Compared to the five-year average of 252 reported fires, this indicates a slight decrease in the number of reported fires. This is likely attributed to inconsistent data collection and a measurable success factor in fire prevention programming.

- The OFM conducts fire investigations where such skills do not exist locally or where fire investigative efforts cannot determine the cause and origin of a fire. 32 of the 238 fires reported in 2019 required an OFM investigation.
 - The number of fires classified as accidental decreased over the 2019 period which may also indicate efforts in educating residents in fire prevention are having a positive impact. These types of fires have a known cause and origin and with continued engagement with community fire services personnel and residents to provide a greater awareness to Fire Prevention programming would likely reduce this statistic further.
 - The number of fires classified as undetermined remained similar to 2018. Fires are classified as undetermined when the cause cannot be proven to an acceptable level of certainty, or where there is insufficient evidence remaining to classify further. Continuing to build upon fire investigation and firefighting skillsets may result in an increase to the level of service being provided to community residents and contribute to improved preservation of perishable evidence to help identify the cause and origin of fires.
- Loss per capita is based on the economic loss per person in the Territory resulting from fires exceeding one hundred thousand dollars. In 2019, the loss per capita was \$3,618,750 this represents a 58% reduction when compared with the 5-year average of \$8,565,000. It is likely the reduction in loss remains positive for the territory despite the undetermined loss in the South Slave Highrise fire. This may be attributed to fire prevention and protection efforts implemented by communities.
- Fire safety inspections ensure compliance with adopted codes and standards. There were 561 inspections conducted in 2019, 66% of these inspections occurred in the North Slave Region. This trend has been consistent over the last several years and indicates an uneven distribution of inspection needs across the regions. There is a continuing need for flexibility across regions in meeting the OFM's fire safety inspection and other regulatory obligations.
- RCMP data shows 41 arson investigations in 2019, which is consistent with the previous year. The OFM works with communities in the development of local fire prevention education programs aimed at raising awareness and managing risks associated with arson. The RCMP and OFM are increasing collaboration efforts on investigating and reducing arson related criminal activity.
- In 2019 the OFM continued working with MACA's School of Community Government (SCG) to ensure community access to accredited and non-accredited fire training. The focus of fire training for smaller communities was related to scene safety and security, and defensive firefighter training. Larger communities with greater firefighting capacity and resources focused efforts on meeting professional firefighter qualifications.

On-Going Activities

Fire Prevention Week

Each year, the OFM uses Fire Prevention Week (FPW) to educate residents and promote fire safety awareness initiatives in line with a national theme. In 2019, FPW occurred October 6th through 12th, and the theme was:

“Not every hero wears a cape. Plan and Practice your Escape!”

The focus of the campaign was to raise awareness on keeping your family safe by having a home fire escape plan and practicing it regularly.

The OFM targets three main audiences during FPW:

1. Residents

General fire safety information is shared with NWT residents to help them understand and better prepare for the dangers of fire. In 2019, the following materials were shared with residents:

- Escape Planning Safety Tip Sheet;
- How to make a Home Fire Escape Plan; and
- Smoke Alarm Safety Tips.

2. Schools and Parents

Schools have an important role in helping to educate children and their families on the importance of fire safety. Fire department members may also be invited to participate in a school presentation, activity, or sharing fire safety tips. This year the following materials were shared with schools:

- A principal and teacher letter describing the FPW campaign and encouraging participation;
- A “Fire Safety Starts With You” - Student Activity Booklet with puzzles, games, quizzes, and general fire safety information;
- A teacher lesson plan with suggested activities on how to make effective use of the activity booklets; and
- A family letter and home fire safety inspection checklist encouraging parents to review the activity booklets with their children and inspect their home for fire safety.

3. Community Fire Departments

Program materials and guidance information is provided to assist community fire departments with maximizing the effectiveness of FPW activities. This year the following materials were shared with fire departments:

- A letter to fire departments encouraging their participation in FPW;
- A Fire Prevention Week Toolkit to assist with educating the public containing;
 - Press Releases,
 - Safety Tips,
 - Printable Activities,
 - Proclamation,
 - Fundraising Letter, and
 - Logos and more.

Training Initiatives

MACA's School of Community Government (SCG) provides communities accredited and non-accredited fire training through a variety of delivery methods. This includes in-community (face to face) and online delivery methods using Territorial and College of the Rockies fire training instructors who provide firefighter evaluations in the form of written and practical testing that meet industry standards.

Customized fire training programs allow flexible and community driven initiatives to enhance community protection and preparedness. Accreditation by the College of the Rockies allows participants to hold certification under recognized Fire Fighting standards and enhances personal development as well as generates a set base of volunteers making those skills applicable anywhere in the NWT or Canada.

Communities can request training from a basic level (prevention based) up to a professional level - National Fire Protection Association (NFPA 1001) depending on community objectives, available resources, needs and capacity. Additional training options are also available such as fire inspection (NFPA 1031), fire investigator (NFPA 1033), and fire officer (NFPA 1021) training.

The OFM continues to:

- Assist MACA's SCG with identifying and developing new training curriculum, advising on fire service training priorities, and recommending course delivery strategies consistent with community fire protection action plans.
- Assist communities in understanding their fire training needs and developing appropriate training plans.

Plan Review

Plan review is the examination of building drawings and specifications to determine whether they meet the requirements of the *Fire Prevention Regulations* and adopted codes and standards. The OFM is responsible for reviewing plans for all construction in the NWT excluding single family dwellings and ancillary structures for single family dwellings.

With the exception of within Yellowknife, there is no regulatory authority in the NWT to ensure a building is safe for public occupancy in relation to adopted codes and standards, beyond the fire safety requirements identified by the *Fire Prevention Act*. Plans and specifications are reviewed by the OFM to determine whether they meet the fire safety requirements adopted by the *Fire Prevention Regulations*. Developers are responsible to ensure all statutory requirements are met and construction is completed in a manner consistent with the OFM plan review assessment.

The OFM participates with a National Research Council (NRC) Fire Safety Standing Committee and as a member of the Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes, and the Provincial/Territorial Policy Advisory Committee on Codes. These committees coordinate the development and revision of the codes adopted through the *Fire Prevention Act* that govern all construction and renovation in the NWT.

The plan review activity involves a wide variety of construction projects including multi-residential, commercial, resource development, fuel storage and dispensing, mining, oil and gas and water supply. Plan review is conducted on a fee for service basis.

In 2019, the OFM reviewed 58 plans for construction of new buildings and/or alterations of existing buildings. This is a significant decrease compared to previous years where the average was 100 plus. The OFM is witnessing an increase in the number of projects proceeding in the absence of the OFM plan review requirement. The rate of non-compliance places regulatory and capacity challenges on the OFM. A focused discussion on this specific issue is planned as part of the update to the *Fire Prevention Act*.

Fire Service Merit Awards

Community firefighters and fire departments play a critical role in safeguarding residents and communities of the NWT. Firefighters are relied upon to provide an essential service that protects the lives and property of all NWT residents. MACA acknowledges the vital contributions made by fire fighters and fire departments through the Fire Service Merit Awards Program (FSMA). The FSMA includes awards for individuals and community fire departments.

All community fire departments, volunteers and paid fire fighters in the NWT are eligible to receive a FSMA. Nominees are considered for awards based on their contribution to the NWT fire service and/or community fire protection.

This contribution may include, but is not limited to:

- An outstanding achievement in fire protection;
- An innovative idea or solution to a fire related issue;
- A high degree of personal commitment;
- A demonstrated improvement over the past year (including training achievements); and
- The impact of achievements on the community and/or the territory.

Community fire service awards are presented to recognize outstanding efforts to the NWT fire service made by a community. Only those communities that have shown a marked enhancement of emergency service to the community, measured against a formal assessment by the OFM, will be considered each year. A selection committee chooses award recipients from among all nominations received from the public.

FSMA may be presented to recipients at a public awards ceremony to be held each year to coincide with FPW (the week containing October 9th of each year). Awards are presented regionally.

In 2019, the following nominee received a FSMA:

- Andy Carpenter, Fort Providence Fire Chief – leadership, dedication & ongoing commitment to the Fort Providence Fire Department.

Length of Service Awards

MACA recognizes career and volunteer firefighters for years of NWT service for lengths of 2, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35 years through presenting service pins, medals, or a commemorative clasp and service bar for each period.

All volunteer and career firefighters are eligible to receive length of service awards. MACA maintains a length of service database on community firefighters, the Department issues recognition awards annually to eligible NWT firefighters.

The OFM issues length of service awards as nominations are received and verified. Awards are typically presented at a community organized event. OFM may attend at the request of the community.

In 2019, thirty-nine (39) long service recognition awards were distributed to recognize NWT career and volunteer firefighters with ceremonies in Fort Smith, Hay River and Yellowknife.

NWT Fire Chief's Association - Annual General Meeting

Annually, MACA contributes to and participates in the NWT Fire Chief's Association annual general meeting and learning symposium held in Yellowknife. This event provides an opportunity for MACA to update community fire service officials on Public Safety initiatives. It also allows fire service personnel from across the Territory an opportunity to interact with keynote speakers from across Canada and discuss issues and challenges with their peers and includes educational opportunities relating to emergency service delivery. The relationship and collaboration between MACA and the NWT Fire Chief's Association is critical to advancing the NWT Fire Service.

Conclusion

The OFM and NWT Communities were faced with many challenges and opportunities in 2019. Despite best efforts, and like other jurisdictions in Canada, the NWT continues to suffer loss due to fires and other emergencies. Maintaining and delivering emergency services is challenging for all communities in the NWT. Despite these challenges, communities continue to make extraordinary efforts to deliver these services effectively and to the best of their ability. Municipal and Community Affairs, through the OFM and other program areas, continues to support all communities to face these challenges. Together we are working to increase awareness of fire risk, improve fire protection programming, and increase the capacity of local fire services. The OFM looks forward to continuing its work to support the advancement of emergency services throughout the NWT and improve fire protection for all residents.

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