

Emergencies now more top of mind

Langley Times

Thu Apr 7 2011

Page: 8

Section: News

Byline: Natasha Jones

Several months ago, Langley's emergency planning co-ordinator Ginger Sherlock began the groundwork for a campaign that would spell out in detail the agencies that exist to help us when we need them.

Now, a month after the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami that devastated vast areas of northeast Japan, the campaign has taken on a greater sense of immediacy and importance.

"I hate to say it, but you learn from other people's disasters," Township Mayor Rick Green commented at Wednesday's launch of Community Awareness Regarding Emergencies (CARE) campaign at the west end of Langley Regional Airport's east-west runway.

The timing for public awareness - the whole purpose of CARE - couldn't have been better. On May 7, all the agencies that exist to keep the community safe will be at Willowbrook Shopping Centre from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

At booths inside and outside the mall, residents will be able to find out what these agencies are, when and how they are deployed, and where they can find out more information.

People will be able to see the tools the agency personnel use to perform their jobs, and learn how they are put into action.

One of the most important features of CARE will be "Langley - Who to Call." These are reference sheets with a list of agencies and phone numbers which will be given out on May 7.

Against a backdrop of uniformed personnel, ambulances, a police car, fire truck, RCMP helicopter and search and rescue watercraft, Sherlock said: "We are reaching out to the public to show them that this is how we keep them safe."

Canada Border Services will be represented at the May 7 event. "Does the public know what they do?" she added.

"This is a great opportunity because the public doesn't know what these agencies do."

The disaster in Japan may still be uppermost in the minds of many people, but time weakens the memory, as Green explained: "We talk about this when it happens. We get very upset and we get very concerned. And then time goes by and then it's out of sight, out of mind.

"We have to learn from that," he said.

Sherlock has been busier than usual since the magnitude 9 earthquake and tsunami in Japan. "My phone has not stopped ringing," she said. People are asking her speak to seniors, school communities and other groups who want to be prepared.

Twenty-two agencies and services will be represented at Willowbrook. They include RCMP and local fire departments, bylaw enforcement, B.C. Ambulance Service, E-COMM 9-1-1, Search and Rescue,

transit police, Commercial Vehicle Safety Enforcement, CP and CN Railway police, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Copyright 2011 Langley Times