

EMAC (Employee Mgt. Advisory Committee) met on Friday in Edmonton.

In attendance:

Dianne Dunn - Director HR

Chris Twaits - HR Consultant

Tom Archibald - Forestry Manager - Peace River

Doug Slatnik - FWD Enforcement Field Services Mgr. - Lac LaBiche

Todd Letwin - Compliance Manager sitting in for Gordon McClure, Director, Land Business Services

Jason Pankratow - Forest Officer - Forestry Division - Slave Lake

Jason Hanson - F and W officer - Cold Lake

Brian Randall - AUPE Membership Services Officer

Agenda Items:

1. Safety on Lookout Towers - Update
2. Taxable Benefits re: Trucks - Update
3. Government Housing
4. New Vehicle Policy and Sby for F and W
5. Hiring Practices/promotions
6. Performance agreements - Purpose
7. District FWD Officer Competition
8. SRD Employee Orientation
9. Enforcement Review Update

I took a few notes and I thought you might be interested in seeing what was discussed. Keep in mind that these are only my notes and the "official" minutes from the meeting will be forthcoming. If any of the other EMAC members wish to add anything or correct me, please feel free and "reply to all" when doing so.

I believe most of the hi lites are covered within the following:

**Safety on Lookout Towers - Update - Archibald**

- Expert Panel was hired. It was comprised of Ex-RCMP and ex- FWD Enforcement staff to include Doug Fulford and Jim Nichols
- Report completed and submitted to executive
- Executive is currently reviewing the report and will be releasing the report somewhere down the road
- Recommendations on the report include:
  1. Review design of tower sites and incorporate and environmental design in line with the crime prevention model
  2. Review working alone policy. Policy wording changes: all tower personnel **must** carry a radio when away from the cabin instead of should carry a radio.
  3. Review Personnel safety and review radio operation i.e. "panic button" on new fireline radios. Fire Centers do not, at present, have the ability to identify the radio identifier code if the panic button is pushed linking it back to the user. They are working on this.
  4. 51 gates have been purchased and should be installed by the fall. All forest areas have been informed to remove the tower signs from primary and secondary highways
  5. Extra lighting at the sights
  6. More training through the Hinton Training Centre

## **Taxable Benefits re: Trucks - Update - HR**

No change. Government vehicles are not to be used for personal use.

## **Government Housing**

There was a concern from those living in Gov. housing. They are unaware of who to contact regarding maintenance issues and allotted budgets for upkeep.

Government housing is under infrastructure. With the retirement of Peter Hrabchuk it is believed the Bruce Barnes is the contact

## **New Vehicle Policy and Standby for F and W**

- All FWD officers were hand-delivered letters advising them that of the vehicle policy and stand by changes on April 11/07. It was the required 3 month notice that as of July 10, all FWD vehicles must be parked after hours in the compound and officers will be put on a standby roster
- Memo from director of Enforcement Field Services, Deryl Empson of May 3rd stated that there will be a standby shift schedule from July 1 - Sept 30. Schedules will be drafted for 3 month periods.
- FWD has concerns that this change resulted from the department trying to make everything in line with "consistency" and "fairness". FWD questioned whether this is happening across the dept. to include the lands division. Lands division does not have a shift schedule. HR responded by saying that FWD has a history and operational requirement that they will respond to calls outside of regular hours.
- Question #1 : Is there is any authority to put someone on standby? HR responded by saying that it is covered under labor law whereby mgt. has the right to schedule, assign and allocate work.
- Question #2: Is there authority to place someone on standby who doesn't have it in their job description? Answer: It doesn't have to be in the job description. Mgt. reserves the right to schedule, assign and allocate work.
- Question #3: What authority does the dept. have to put a FWD officer on standby for another area (outside of the geographical area in which they were hired and assigned. Answer: Department can move staff around the province as they see fit to meet objectives.
- FWD had concerns with unknown geographical area and knowledge of the people and backgrounds outside of their respective areas. FWD also had concerns with meeting response times when their responsible coverage areas (the adjacent areas). There was concern for public safety in lower response times (problem bear calls are an example). There was also a officer safety concern with no backup available .Big concern with personal risk and public safety.
- HR advised that the schedules were drafted based on service levels. SRD doesn't want to impact service levels or put dept. staff at risk
- FWD will have a vehicle when they are on standby
- Doug Slatnik said that there was a historical analysis completed. They are trying to meet operational concerns by upping resource needs to meet higher risk areas. The managers met on May 24th in an attempt to make provincially consistent schedules so that FWD has good provincial coverage. The schedule has each officer on standby and average of 10 - 13 days per month. He also advised that officers were seldomly put on standby on their days off.
- Jason Hanson advised that he is the president of Alberta Fish Warden Association and has been receiving a high volume of calls and emails regarding officers concerns with this change.
- Brian Randall advised HR that grievances are forthcoming.

## **Hiring Practices/promotions**

HR currently has a few issues with recruitment standards (specific to post secondary and job experience/ years of service). This is currently under review.

HR is currently dealing with high volumes of recruitments including within their own section. They are attempting to recruit HR consultants to fill vacancies in an order to process the continual recruitment requests from the dept.

I raised the concern regarding the pay grade difference between the public land officers (white zone land mgt. officers) and the Forest Officers. Currently the Land Mgt. Officers working with in the white zone i.e. Peace River, Medicine Hat, Red Deer and Lethbridge are at the NR 8 level. Forest Officers doing both Land Mgt. and Forest Mgt in the green zone are at the NR 6 level. These levels were determined by PREP (Point Rating Evaluation Process) and will not change. HR advises that the Land Mgt. White zone positions were classified under PREP. The position was given points to justify it's pay grade level as was the Forest Officer Land Mgt. positions.

I personally am uncertain as to how the process worked and what the qualifications were that deemed the positions to be graded as they are.

From talking with some of the forest officers and I quote *"We used their (White Zone Land Mgt. Officers) job description template as directed by HR because it identified the tasks, responsibilities etc. we perform, they are signed off by area managers and division directors acknowledging we perform the same tasks as those classified as NR8"*.

HR advises that if the PREP Classification for Forest Officer's was appealed and denied, the issue is closed and will NOT be reopened again. At the time of EMAC, I did not know if the classification had been challenged via the appeal route.

### **Performance agreements - Purpose**

Concerns brought forth that the PA's were very time consuming with very little value. A yearly "cut and paste" exercise. HR advised that the PA's should be a workable document of value to both the dept. and the employee. It is the employee's career plan and career development "map". Diane handed out the "Performance Planning - Why Bother?" handout and reminded all staff to continually refer to the HR Internet Website.

<http://internalsrd/HRPortal/performance.aspx>

[http://internalsrd/HRPortal/Site%20Documents/Performance%20Management/performance\\_planning\\_why\\_bother.doc](http://internalsrd/HRPortal/Site%20Documents/Performance%20Management/performance_planning_why_bother.doc)

### **District FWD Officer Competition**

Issue: A recent competition was advertised for District F and W officers. It was the intent of the Dept. to build an eligibility list. The vacant locations were not listed on the competition. Successful candidates would be used to fill existing vacancies. They would also be eligible for future vacancies.

Permanent officers had concerns that they would not have a chance to bid on vacancies if they did not put their name forth for this competition.

The criteria and intent of the competition was not made clear to all FWD staff. Staff were under the impression that if they applied, were successful and turned down a location that they would not be considered for future vacancies.

Discussion: HR is looking at extending the competition due to miscommunication from the original ad. The Eligibility List will expire Mar 2008.

Locations will be advertised as they arise. Officers not on the list will have the opportunity to enter the competition at the time of advertisement for specific locations. Those officers will be in competition with those already on the eligibility list.

## **SRD Employee Orientation**

HR reminded staff to utilize the orientation website.

<http://internalsrd/HRPortal/Orientation/default.aspx>

## **Enforcement Review Update - Letwin , Compliance Manager**

An enforcement review of the roles and responsibilities of a Forest Officer is currently underway. It is driven primarily by Southern Rockies, Clearwater and Foothills (due to the recreation component). A 1.5 day session was held in Red Deer in February. Phase I involved completing the recommendations with the assistance of a consultant and submit to the executive. This phase is complete. Phase II is currently underway. This is the "How to set up the program" portion to include job descriptions and who does what. It will be based on Safety and is expected to be finished this fall.

Some forest officers including seasonal staff are trained via the Recreational Guardian Training and Defensive Tactics training. These officers can be equipped with the appropriate enforcement tools including pepper spray and ticket books.

With safety in mind, Forest Officers are not required to be out after 8:00 p.m. Any issues after that time will be covered under the RCMP mandate.

The enforcement review resulted from the changes in the Peace Officer's Act effective May 1, 2007.

And that concludes my 2 bits..... Please continue to forward any concerns or questions you have and I will collaborate them and insure they are discussed, if need be at the next meeting. A date and time was not set for the next meeting. You will be advised when this happens. I will also let you know when the official minutes are out.