Lessons Learned - A Major Field Incident

Alex Drummond
Renewable Resources
In memory of Suzanne Abele
* A fatality - researcher killed when ATV fell into a deep washout
* Immediate and appropriate response
* RCMP, Provincial OH&S, and Ualberta investigations

*The Incident*
* **TRAUMA**
  * Emotional trauma amongst the whole team especially on-site colleagues
  * Major emotional impact throughout dept.
  * Research partners’ concern

* **PANIC**
  * Finding documents
  * Unclear path forward

* **Immediate follow up**
* Investigations
* Research team was interviewed/questioned
* All documents seized - including research notes
* Project shut down
* Gathering all information and interacting with multiple agencies was challenging
  * Multiple documents in multiple locations

* Immediate Follow up
* Immediate review of safety plan
* Implemented 6 recommendations from EH&S
  * Mostly related to ATV protocols
* Worked closely with partners to implement a very rigorous ATV and road inspection plan
MANY person-hours to manage
- EH&S
- Renewable Resources
- University counsel
- External counsel
- University Public Affairs
- Research group

Time and money

Ongoing follow up
**4+ years after the incident**
**7 day Judicial Inquiry**
  * Emotional
  * Expensive
  * Exposure

**UofA praised for its immediate response and follow up**
*Program has very detailed and careful ATV plan
  * Training and record keeping
  * Maintenance program
  * Speed limits
  * Road inspections monthly and after major weather events
  * Weekly or as needed contact with road owner
  * Greater communication re research plans with lease holders in the area
* Institutional recognition of field safety planning
* New tools for field researchers
* Greater recognition by researchers of safety planning
* Overall improvement in field safety
* From a reviewed and strong safety plan at the time of the incident to a very rigorous and workable plan that protects the researchers and the institution.