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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

### **MOCK EVACUATION, SALUTE TO VOLUNTEERS KICK OFF EP WEEK**

VANCOUVER – A mock-evacuation and a salute to B.C.’s 13,000 public safety lifeline volunteers by Solicitor General John van Dongen kicked off Emergency Preparedness Week today in Vancouver.

“Volunteers fill a tremendous role within B.C.’s emergency management system, helping with searches, evacuations and multi-vehicle highway accidents where rescues are required,” said van Dongen, who participated in the mock-evacuation. “In recognition of their outstanding contributions to public safety, we are issuing a new bumper sticker that reads, ‘Volunteers: B.C.’s Public Safety Lifeline’.”

Public safety lifeline volunteers also play a critical role in delivering emergency social services, PEP Air’s aerial searches and amateur radio communications. In 2006/07, the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre received more than 1,000 search and rescue and 2,300 motor vehicle incident reports.

The Province, through the Provincial Emergency Program, supports volunteer response by providing training, equipment and insurance. Last year, the Province provided \$750,000 to emergency rescue volunteer groups to purchase specialized emergency rescue equipment, including swift-water rescue gear like helmets, floatation devices and rescue boards; long-range, specialized radio kits; and a hovercraft for Ridge Meadows Search and Rescue.

During Emergency Preparedness Week, which runs May 4-10, public safety lifeline volunteers, local governments and emergency personnel will hold events, seminars and training demonstrations in communities throughout the province.

“We appreciate the time and efforts of these volunteers in training and preparing for an emergency,” said Vancouver Mayor Sam Sullivan. “City Council has recently increased our emergency preparedness budget by \$270,000 and, together with the kind of community spirit exemplified by our volunteers, citizens of Vancouver can feel assured that their community is ready in the event of an emergency or a disaster.”

Established in 1996, Emergency Preparedness Week is an annual, national event during the first full week of May. The main objective is to increase awareness about individual preparedness and reinforce the idea that individuals can reduce the risks and lessen the consequences of a disaster through better preparation.

For more information on Emergency Preparedness Week, B.C.'s public safety lifeline volunteers and how to obtain a bumper sticker, visit [www.pep.bc.ca](http://www.pep.bc.ca) online.

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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