



**\* 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

\* **Solutions**

- \* 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

## \* Judicial Inquiry



- \* 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

\* **Currently**

- \* Institutional recognition of field safety planning
- \* New tools for field researchers
- \* Greater recognition by researchers of safety planning
- \* Overall improvement in field safety

\* **Currently**

\*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.

\***Evolution**

\* Alex Drummond

\* [alex.drummond@ualberta.ca](mailto:alex.drummond@ualberta.ca)

\* 2-2056

\* Thanks