

Water main breaks forced the town of Port aux Basques to declare a state of emergency on Tuesday and town officials called upon the Marine Institute's Safety and Emergency Response Training Centre (SERT) in Stephenville to aid their emergency response capability.

"Fire Commissioner Fred Hollett contacted me on Tuesday afternoon and asked if the SERT Centre could supply 5000 feet of hose along with a spare pumper truck and necessary personnel," said Craig Harnum, manager, SERT Centre. "Within two hours, we were on the scene to respond to the request."

Because of the break in the water distribution line, sections of the town were without water, including schools and the hospital. "The supply of water to the hospital became one of the major concerns," added Mr. Harnum. "We were able to use the 5000 feet of hose and run it from a hydrant to the hospital so that the patients who could not be moved would have an adequate water supply."

Mr. Harnum goes on to explain that due to the water break, the town's fire response capacity had also been compromised. As a result, they asked the SERT Centre to supply a pumper truck and firefighting personnel in the event that it would be required. "We sent our 1000 gallon tanker pumper truck and two guys to stay on site in case they were needed. The town was truly appreciative of the services we could provide to them and we were happy to assist," said Mr. Harnum.

This is not the first time the SERT Centre was called upon to provide emergency assistance. SERT Centre officials and students were in Stephenville to help during the devastating floods of 2005. They are also there to help out if necessary when fire breaks out in Stephenville or surrounding towns.

Glenn Blackwood, executive director of the Marine Institute was thankful that the SERT Centre was able to assist the town. "The SERT Centre is known as one of the premier fire fighting training facilities in Canada with world class equipment and expertise. We are happy to lend that equipment and expertise and are pleased that, when called upon in an emergency, the centre can help to meet vital community needs. The centre has become more than just a successful training facility, it has become a vital component of the area's emergency response capability."