

Taking AERF Mainstream Spreading the Word About This Important ALPA Resource

By Capt. Ed Lowry
(ExpressJet), AERF
President

It's an unfortunate reality that we are frequently unaware of the many resources available to us through ALPA until we are confronted with situations that make us truly thankful they're there. The ALPA Emergency Relief Fund (AERF) is a perfect example. Many of our pilots are probably unaware that this important member resource even exists, and yet each of us is just one catastrophic event away from needing it.

In late June, Calgary and parts of southern Alberta were deluged with heavy rainfall and record floods that destroyed homes and businesses and claimed the lives of four people. The provincial government later reported that approximately 55,000 square kilometers were directly affected by the flooding and that more than 100,000 people were forced out of more than 10,000 homes. I remember seeing vivid pictures of the devastation on the evening news.

Capt. Chris Kampen, chairman of the Canadian North Master Executive Council (MEC), immediately called me to get some information for his members about AERF and to see what he could do to expedite assistance. The Canadian North MEC then contacted potentially affected pilots to make sure they knew that this benefit is available.

Fortunately, most of the Canadian North pilots and

other ALPA members in and around Calgary didn't need aid, but Kampen assured us that the pilots who did greatly appreciated the support they received—and that gave the MEC an idea.

The Canadian North pilots were already scheduled to have a Family Awareness barbeque the following month. As part of this event, the MEC officers decided

the funds they raised at the event.

This AERF fundraiser was particularly timely because some of our pilots have questioned whether AERF is available to Canadian ALPA members. Let me state for the record that AERF is intended for all ALPA members who qualify. AERF provides financial assistance to help pilots and their families deal



F/O Olivier Goudreau, the Canadian North MEC vice chairman, takes his turn in the dunk tank to help raise money for AERF.

to volunteer to sit in a dunk tank to raise money for AERF. Kampen understands that the program is only as successful as our members make it, and that the fund relies solely on donations.

Kampen alternated with F/O Olivier Goudreau, MEC vice chairman, and Capt. Corey Hazelwood, MEC secretary-treasurer, taking turns dangling above a tank while pilots and their family members attempted to hit a target with a ball to send the sitting officer plunging into icy-cold water. The MEC then made a much-appreciated contribution to AERF from

with the immediate, extraordinary expenses caused by widespread catastrophic events.

I would be remiss if I didn't once again acknowledge the sizeable donations the United Pilots Unity Fund and the Delta Pilots Charitable Fund made earlier this year to help us accommodate those affected by Hurricane Sandy and to keep the fund afloat. These contributions were extremely generous, but more help is needed.

My fellow AERF board members, F/Os Christine Gromek (United) and Mark Segaloff (Continental), and

I want you to think of AERF in the same way you think about your ALPA worldwide accident/incident hotline "orange card" or the Aeromedical Office. Always be aware that this resource is available, and don't hesitate to use it when you need it.

Follow the excellent example of the Canadian North pilots and consider raising money to support AERF. The fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, so if you have questions about appropriate fund-raising activities, don't hesitate to give us a call. As a matter of fact, we have some fund-raising plans of our own, but you'll hear more about that later this fall.

The obvious—and sometimes not so obvious—advantages of belonging to ALPA come from airline pilots pooling their resources and working together to support each other. Only by taking these steps is ALPA's existence possible, and only by promoting and backing AERF will this resource be available to us. So spread the word and support AERF! Think of it as our collective rainy-day savings account.

To learn more about AERF and other emergency-related resources, or to watch a video about a member whose family benefited from the program, request a grant, or make a donation, go to www.alpa.org/relieffund. Donations are tax-deductible in the United States, but remember that AERF is available to *all* ALPA members—above and below the 49th parallel—who qualify. 