

Emergency services learn from newcomers also

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Cindy Jiang, who came to Canada from China only three months ago, was also smiles when she said the EMS workers are all "pretty nice."

"I think it's a good program for newcomers," said Jiang, who recommended ESINC for all those like her.

Jiang's LINC teacher Yvonne Hiney concurred wholeheartedly: "We've needed a program like this for a long time."

ESINC is a partnership between Halton Emergency Medical Services (EMS), the fire departments of Oakville, Burlington, Milton and Halton Hills, as well as the Halton Multicultural Council (HMC) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

It's a made-in-Halton program whereby members of police, fire and EMS attend English as a Second Language classes and conduct a presentation explaining who they are, how they operate, what to expect and how to reach them (including a 911 overview). A hand-out package is then distributed that contains crime, fire and accident prevention tips.

As of May 30, 16 ESINC classes have been delivered and it's expected that 25 to 30 classes will be delivered annually.

During last Tuesday's event it was made abundantly clear that ESINC is in fact a successful part of the ongoing effort by emergency services in Halton to make the region a leader in welcoming all new Canadians to this community.

After all, the day-to-day reality in Halton is that all emergency services are dealing with a changing community and new Canadians don't always know what to expect when police, fire or an ambulance show up at their door.

In other countries, emergency services operate differently, and not always to Canadian standards. Some new Canadians have lived in countries where police organizations in particular have been perceived to be corrupt or oppressive. That's why the learning on both sides is so important.

According to Halton Regional Police Diversity Officer Nishan Duraipah, what everyone has learned so far has proven to be not only enlightening, but so important it may actually save lives.

For example, he explained how in some countries the public must pay ambulance attendants or police before being helped.

As a result, they may let a loved one suffer — or perhaps even die — unaware that in Halton, financial considerations are never part of the equation.

The reverse is also true. The more information emergency personnel have about perceptions and misunderstand-

ings, the better equipped they are when responding to an emergency.

"We are also educated in return by knowing what their needs and concerns are," said Chief Algar. "It goes both ways."

Halton EMS Director Jim King

explained that the learning curve for newcomers includes a host of valuable and practical knowledge ranging from 911 use and CPR to the need for child car seats and water safety.

He also encouraged the use of "patient vials" containing vital informa-

tion about the special medical needs of homeowners.

Burlington Fire Chief Steve Thurlow, speaking on behalf of Halton's four fire departments, added program participants learn proper smoke alarm use.

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