

# **AES Staff, the Backbone of Downsview Open House**

It was one of the largest government-staged Environment Week activities in the country. It was reported by the media, from Saskatchewan to Washington D.C., and was attended by teachers, science writers, environmentalists and government officials, but the AES Downsview Headquarters Open House, held June 5 to celebrate World Environment Day, will be remembered above all by AES staff.

Together, employees in the building mounted 17 different exhibits and presentations illustrating the general theme: "Measuring the Atmosphere as the Backbone of AES". In addition they put up stands and wall exhibits around the building, converted classrooms into living illustrations of

the atmosphere...the chemicals that fill it and the weather that shapes it.

Dozens more staff acted as guides, sign bearers, receptionists, media relations and "odd job people", doing everything from delivering messages to liaising with cafeteria staff. A few like Dr. Alex Chisholm and Dr. Wayne Evans of Atmospheric Processes Branch and Al Malinauskas of the Climate Centre held press conferences on major topics like the ozone hole, international agreements to protect the ozone layer or the impacts of Global Climate Change.

Senior AES staff gave major presentations and repeated them throughout the day to ensure that as many visitors as possible could attend the



Photo: Mike Duffy

**Highlight of AES Downsview Open House was the launch of this ozone sonde balloon. Despite rain showers, a large crowd gathered to watch the send off.**

events. For example, Dr. Ray Hoff gave several hour-long presentations at the Chemicals in the Atmosphere Centre (Classroom #3) where he led his audience through a number of illustrated panels covering major environmental issues like acid rain, arctic haze, toxic chemicals, radioactive releases, greenhouse gases and ozone. Meanwhile in another classroom on the main floor Ken Daly of Training Branch and Stu McNair of Weather Services Directorate traced the development and preparation of the daily weather forecast, allowing visitors to analyze tomorrow's weather.

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Even though there were only 105 specially invited guests, the whole building buzzed with small groups of people led by sign-wielding volunteers scurrying to all floors, eager to see everything from radiosonde balloon launches in the basement courtyard to multi-screened doppler radar displays on the fourth floor.

Despite activities, spread out all over the building, it was the lobby and auditorium on the main floor that formed the crux of the Open House.

The auditorium with its 400 seats attracted some of the largest crowds. There was enough space to accommodate AES staff in contrast to some events in other parts of the building which risked being overcrowded if too many employees tagged along. Notices went up saying that AES staff were welcome in the auditorium.

One talk that drew the crowds was the opening address by Doug Tesch, an AES training manager from Cornwall, Ontario. Reviewing all the activities of AES from surface observation to cloud physics, Tesch told his audience that AES services cost the public around a dime a day for a family of four. He described AES as a "life force of 2400 clerks, technicians, scientists, managers and others at work every hour of every day in every part of Canada". He added, "If you look behind a rock or under a bridge you will likely come across someone

working for AES or at least an instrument that they have placed there". He drew some of the biggest laughs when he described the Downsview building as a locale for aliens from outer space...judging by



**Doug Tesch starts off the Open House, AES Downsview.**

the strange instruments on the roof and the bizarre, unearthly weather statue in the grounds.

Most of the audience in the auditorium stayed on for Dr. Evans' presentation of the ozone layer: "A Hole in the Sky". They then heard Dr. Alex Chisholm speak about Canada's leading role on the world stage in protecting the ozone layer.

An afternoon session in the auditorium, also open to AES staff, had Henry Hengeveld of the Canadian Climate Centre talking about the Global Greenhouse Experiment "unplanned, uncontrolled, uncertain". Finally AES personnel could attend a presentation on acid rain.

The main lobby, a proven AES exhibit area, was even busier. Three prominent displays struck visitors as they entered the building, one was a life-size Brewer spectrometer, used for measuring depletion of the ozone layer, the other was a MESONET station and the third was a balloon calibration booth showing diagrams of a dozen different balloons — from football-size to giant upper atmosphere sondes. On show in all its glory was a bright red tethered balloon adding to the banner-strewn ceiling's festival-like atmosphere. Off to the sides were further displays from the Multi-Purpose Display Station for modern weather office display of graphic weather data, to displays on AES careers and Agrometeorology.



**AES Open House organizers and volunteers seated left to right; Ev Wilson, Brenda O'Connor, Ann Bishop, Liana Kreamer, Julie Young, Sue Milburn, Stu McNair, Pat McFarlane, standing left to right; Heather Mackey, Peter Scholefield, Don Scott, Terry Forget, Scott Somerville, Ken Daly, John McBride, Mike Duffy, Gordon Black, Brenda Smith, Gloria Korson, Mary-Anne Teeter.**

The most spectacular event of the day was probably the launching of the giant ozone sonde balloon from the grass on the south side of the building. Twice postponed because of rain, the launch preceded by the pumping of helium gas into a spacious transparent skin, attracting a crowd of 200-300, many of them AES employees. It took four people to get the balloon from its slack prone position to its long, vertical launch shape, ready for ascent into the grey clouds above.

Other presentation experts included Dr. Jim Young (Air Quality); Cliff Crozier and Dr. Roy Stewart (Weather Radar); Tony Hilton (Radiosonde); Paul Shalapata (Data Acquisition Systems); Peter Scholefield (Long-Range Climate Predictions); Andrej Sausleja (Water Levels on the Great Lakes); Dr. Sam Daggupaty and Ev Wilson (Environmental Emergencies); Michael Newark (Tornado Hazards) and Dr. Al. Christie (Chernobyl, one year later).

At a meeting held after the Open House for organizers and volunteers, many speakers made the point that the Open House and the preparations leading up to it had done much to raise AES



*Dr. Paul Joe, contract employee, demonstrates weather radar at a multi-screened display unit.*



*Wes Kobelka of ARQM, centre, gives the air quality monitoring presentation assisted by Armond Gaudenzi, right. The three other people are guests.*



*A popular exhibit in the AES Downsview lobby was this tether sonde balloon attached to a balloon calibration unit below.*

employees' morale. Some speakers went as far as to suggest that at any future open houses, an extra day be added to allow staff and their families to see the displays and demonstrations.

An occasion that was designed to attract a limited number of invited guests, who in turn would inform their own publics (eg. readers, students) of what AES had to offer, by chance became an event that would remain memorable to most AES Downsview staff.

In a letter sent out to all participating staff after the event, ADMA Howard Ferguson wrote, "I am impressed with the reports I have received on the enthusiasm and dedication by each participant during the planning, preparation and presentation of the Open House events".

He added, "Your involvement has contributed to the achievement of the Environment Week objectives of increasing the public awareness of environmental issues in general and for AES, promoting a general awareness of our services to the public".



*Training Branch instructor, Ken Daly, teaches science writer Penny Johnston how to forecast weather at the AES forecasting classroom.*



*Dr. M. Phillips, facing audience, welcomes visitors to the large "Chemicals in the Atmosphere" classroom. Several presentations were given during the day by Dr. R. Hoff.*

# AES Part of Other Environment Week events

The Downsview headquarters Open House was not the only Environment Week event with AES participation. Here is a brief round-up of other activities in which AES had a heavy involvement.

The other large AES Open House was held in the Prince George, B.C. weather office, also on June 5. Some 82 visitors attended and the main display items set up for viewing were the DIGICORA upper air system and the Pacific Weather Centre's Marine Display System. There were also posters, videos and satellite weather displays. The specially invited guest list included school science teachers, media, climate observers, elected representatives and members of provincial organizations and government agencies. A total of 18 organizations were represented and there were several members of the public.

Tom Gigliotti of Pacific Weather Centre said the entire weather office staff did an excellent job, a number coming in on their day off to act as tour guides. All invitees received a new AES Information Kit.



*Left to right, AES's Ken Daly, Don Scott and Steve Hopwood prepare a Stevenson Screen for the Kortright Centre for Conservation's "Weather Walk". The event was a prominent Environment Week event in the Toronto area.*

Meteorological staff from AES Downsview Headquarters helped set up a "Weather Walk" at the Kortright Centre for Conservation north west of Toronto. Instruments supplied by AES combined with others already on the trail aimed to show visitors how weather forecasting fitted into the complete environmental picture. For example, demonstrations of temperature readings from a Stevenson screen were interspersed with a display of a CAPMoN (acid precipitation monitoring network) sensor. Similarly, an AES-implanted rain gauge contrasted with large solar energy collectors en route. Lastly a Patterson anemometer installed by the meteorologists complemented Kortright's own sundial.

The AES meteorologists led the public in the walk and explained how Environment Canada monitors and forecasts weather, the impact of human activities on the atmosphere and how the individual can foretell weather using natural signs and lore. The walk was backed up by a series of films on weather, display of satellite photographs, weather maps, fact sheets and other hand-outs.

Poor weather on the day (Sunday June 7) reduced the number of visitors to the hundreds rather than the several thousand expected had the weather been fine.

In Edmonton the city parks department hosted a "Picnic in the Park" on Sunday June 7. AES contributed by displaying sample weather office products and working charts along with information pamphlets. A similar function was held at Calgary's Shannon Terrace Environmental Education Centre on the same day.

In Yellowknife, N.W.T., AES had a display at the Northern Heritage Centre throughout the week (see photo). The exhibit included radiosonde equipment. In the Yukon. The Yukon Weather Centre contributed to a travelling Environment Week display.

The Sault Ste. Marie weather office held an Open House on June 2. On June 4 they participated with Environment Canada Parks and with the Coast Guard in an educational waterside program.

In Quebec weatheradio displays/kiosks were set up at a number of Environment Canada parks.

Live radio programs and TV interviews with AES staff participating were held in many other centres. Some TV weather forecasters wore green Environment Week baseball caps. Taped messages on weather and environment were also aired. Other offices gave out awards during the week to volunteer climate observers. Large amounts of AES promotional literature were also distributed.



*The picture shows Dennis Malchuk, supervisor, observing and presenting programs at the Yellowknife Weather Office (N.W.T.) pointing to the AES Environment Week display at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre as a visitor looks on.*