

2017 Wildfire Communications & EOC Recommendations - 2018 priorities (level 1)

For: CRD Emergency Preparedness Committee

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Theme 1: Community coordination & communication - Community Liaisons

Concept: Establish CRD liaisons/rural emergency program to facilitate community preparedness promotion, engage local knowledge, to coordinate communication sharing and gathering throughout emergency events, and to support long term planning.

- Establish community liaison concept and role responsibilities that fit with improving regional emergency planning goals
 - Identify and enlist liaison volunteers (and back up)
- Explore opportunities for liaisons to assist communication in support of rural preparedness and emergency event coordination and enhance regional response efforts
 - Support community driven preparedness planning to include individual households/ neighbourhoods and work with local response crews to organize information and meeting locations
 - Engage community in planning updates, identifying community vulnerabilities and coordination needs as demographics and environment changes
 - Work to enhance coordination with local incident command and local response activity information exchange with CRD EOC during emergency events
- Community liaisons will be supported with education, training and access to information to achieve role responsibilities and regional emergency program goals
- Install bulletin boards for liaisons to manage up to date information during events

Theme 2: Supporting mental health & wellness

Concept: Mental health and wellness needs are documented to increase after disasters. Provide supports to workers and residents participating in response efforts and experiencing local disasters to foster resiliency

- Debrief and provide counselling for all staff (CRD and external agency) and volunteers after EOC deactivation
- Distribute information on community and individual preparedness, orders/alerts, evacuation/shelter in place planning, and changing climate impacts to increase self reliance and reduce confusion and anxiety.

Theme 3: Improved permit processes

Concept: Reduce challenges to obtaining and accessing permits to increase self sufficiency and facilitate business continuity

- Create a system which allows residents to pre-qualify and obtain permits for travel based upon the emergency and a strict set of conditions. Residents would be required to renew the permits annually prior to wildfire season. This would reduce resources staff issuing permits, and calls overwhelming the call centre.
- Ensure agriculture permits are included within the permitting process, and include representatives from the agriculture industry and other important agencies as part of the process.
- Pre-qualify stores, accommodations, food, and suppliers annually to ensure they are able to stay open when supplying emergency services.
- During emergencies, permits should be accessible at various locations, potentially including all CRD offices and community liaisons.

Theme 4: Coordinated and targeted education & training

Concept: Increased education and training will enhance coordination of emergency planning, EOC, response and recovery activities

- Provide education and training for elected officials to support role of responsibility and accountability to area residents, and to clarify role of elected official in EOC
- CRD/Municipal staff training to support the regional expansion and utilization of the Emergency Notification System
- Enhanced CRD staff training and partnership development to support EOC functions, staffing and response coordination in-line with 2017 lessons learned
- Implement table top exercise schedule to refine information sharing and interagency/stakeholder emergency response coordination in line with the CRD EOC and Regional Emergency Program (interagency) to educate and uncover weaknesses. Improve.
- Promote FireSmart education to support private/residential engagement with resources and approaches to fuel reduction and risk mitigation on private lands

Theme 5: Communication coordination to increase resiliency

Concept: Planned and coordinated emergency communications reduces impacts of disaster on mental health and wellness and facilitates recovery

- List more details including where to get permits, help with animals, road block locations, evacuation routes, and the impact on essential services and businesses (on all outgoing platforms, posted on website and included in media messaging).
- A short and simple set of guides for responders in various roles including road blocks, door-to-door evacuation notifications, firefighting, emergency operations centre, and other roles.
- Develop a comprehensive crisis communications plan.
- Upgrade internet access at community halls (across the region) to support community liaisons and consistency of information sharing.
- Support the development of a HAM/Amateur Radio network to increase access to local knowledge and coordination into the EOC to increase coordination in the event that normal telecommunications infrastructure is interrupted.

Theme 6: Promoting a culture of preparedness

Concept: Supporting communities through promoting a culture of preparedness

- Encourage area resident preparedness initiatives and private land remediation activities such as fuel reduction and flood mitigation with education and supports
 - Schedule promotional campaigns in spring /fall/winter to increase familiarity with terminology, preparedness, prevention activities and resources available at a household and community level.
 - Broadly promote the Emergency Notification System
- Promote consistent and reliable CRD communication systems to build trust that the regional district will communicate needed information through out an emergency.
- Identify and coordinate to support guide/outfitter and agricultural/hobby farm operations before events occur to enhance communications on preparedness, planning and organization for business continuity and evacuation coordination

Theme 7: Emergency Operations Centre

Concept: Support improvements to the Emergency Operations Centre to increase effectiveness, interagency coordination and external communications

- Review and update CRD EOC policies and processes to incorporate lessons learned from the 2017 wildfire season activation and exercise as training.
- Situational awareness and emergency management software that will enhance record keeping related to position logs and decisions made in the EOC using electronic forms and allow the establishment of a common operating platform for information sharing between the CRD and stakeholder representatives.
- During future EOC activations, staff should be rotated out regularly for a break after 10-14 days on an EOC activation.
- Develop process to ensure that communities sheltering in place have resupply needs met
- Communications improvements:
 - Fire services in electoral areas need better information sharing coordination from the CRD EOC during large scale events that overwhelm local services.
 - The CRD EOC setup should be adjusted to have information placed in the room on the outer edge of the Director. The highest-speed internet connection available should be wired to this corner of the room with a connection for each information team member, to decrease the time necessary to upload files to the internet.
 - Establish a protocol with key stakeholders on how the CRD EOC will communicate with evacuees to ensure that displaced persons have access to status of their situations
 - EOC Information Officers should coordinate a group with external information officers to develop a strategy for working together in emergencies.
 - Ensure that a CRD EOC representative can be accessed 24/7 during activations. Reduce the spokesperson roles to one primary and one secondary for each level of media.
 - One person on the information team tasked solely to social media when EOC is activated at Level 3 or higher to continuously monitor and update responses.
 - More information during alert, order and the recovery phase to provide resources and assure residents using online, text/email/print, video, audio, signage, and dark web platform to ensure accessibility
 - Provide information officer training enhancements and improve interagency communication coordination to relay timely information