

# 2018 Cariboo-Chilcotin Wildfires and Floods

## Response Overview Report

23 November 2018

### Executive Summary

One couldn't imagine a more difficult scenario. Wildfires devastate large areas of the Cariboo-Chilcotin for three months in 2017. An extensive community consultation is completed the following three months, with a report delivered in March 2018. Just over a month later, floods strike two areas within the Cariboo Regional District, stretching through two months. A little more than two months later, another strong wildfire season strikes and stretches over three months.

This report provides a brief overview of the 2018 wildfires and floods, which consumed the time, energy and resources through most of the spring and summer.

With an extensive community consultation completed just one year ago, it was felt as though new feedback could be gathered through an online survey.

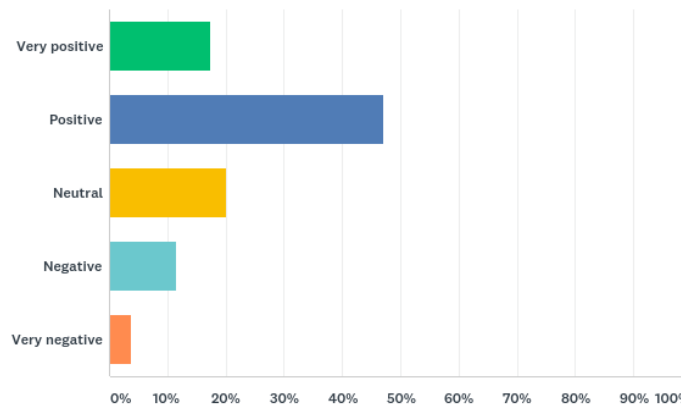
Overall residents felt there was an improvement in emergency response efforts in the region when compared to last year. Recovery needs are much lower, likely due to fewer residents being impacted when compared to last summer's wildfires. Mental health has seen a small drop since last year.

|                        | <b>Wildfires 2017</b>  | <b>Floods 2018</b> | <b>Wildfires 2018</b>  |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Days of emergency      | 77                     | 36                 | 45                     |
|                        | Jul 6 to Sep 20        | Apr 20 to May 25   | Jul 31 to Sep 13       |
| Order/alert changes    | 149                    | 3                  | 51                     |
| People impacted        | 35,616                 | 210                | 9,950                  |
| Per cent of population | 48%                    | 0.3%               | 16%                    |
| Wildfires              | 272                    | -                  | 309                    |
| Hectares Burnt         | 996,141                | -                  | 67,295                 |
| Land area impacted     | 48,099 km <sup>2</sup> | -                  | 14,099 km <sup>2</sup> |
| Per cent of land       | 47%                    | -                  | 17%                    |
| Parcels impacted       | 32,937                 | 120                | 6,238                  |
| Homes lost             | 60                     | -                  | -                      |
| Outbuildings lost      | 167                    | -                  | 3                      |

## Survey – Wildfires

Survey – Floods: We did not receive enough responses from those impacted by floods to provide statistically-accurate results. Therefore, only an evaluation of wildfire responses is provided.

### Q1 How would you rate the overall response by all agencies to this summer's wildfires?



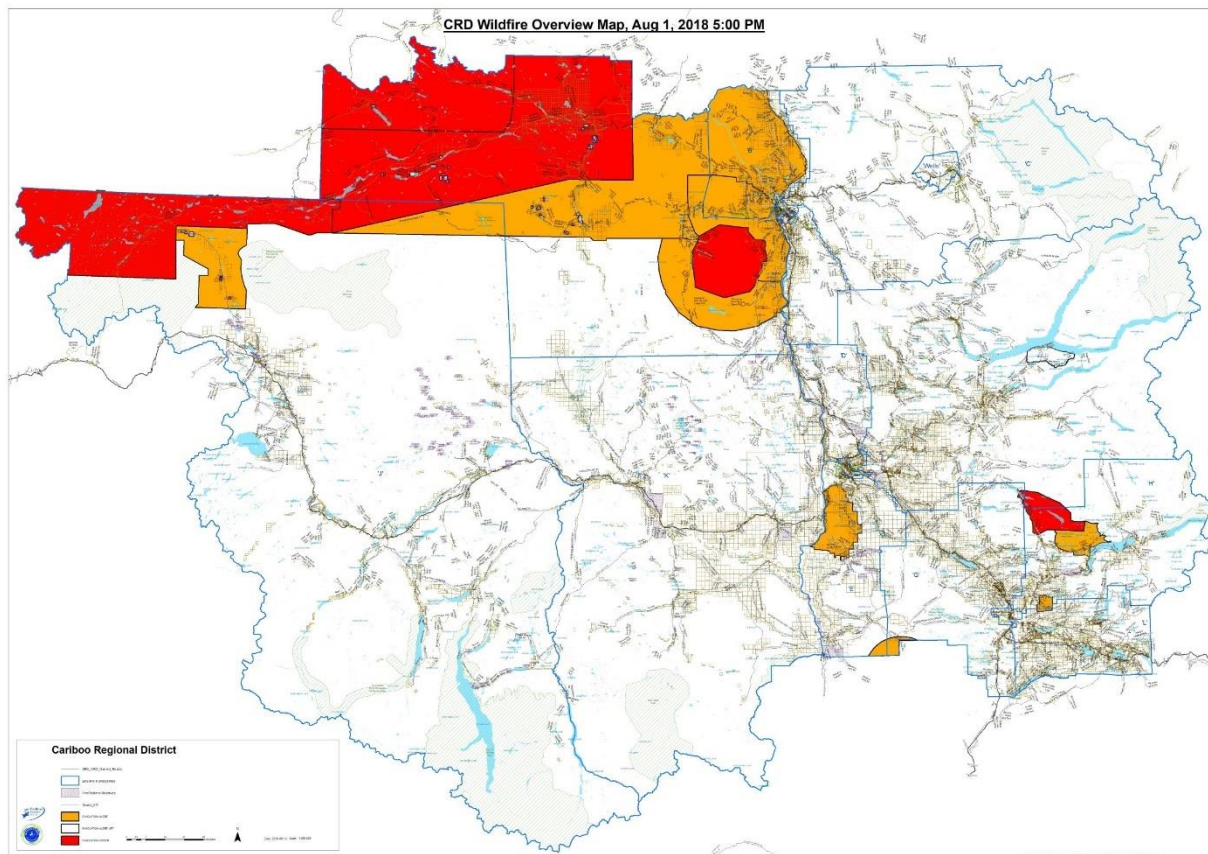
Overall response by all agencies improved compared to last year, with 65% positive ratings in 2018 compared to 44% positive ratings in 2017. 45% said the response by all agencies was better or much better, with 40% saying it was about the same, and only 15% said it was worse or much worse.

The Cariboo Regional District's response was rated 69% positive this year, compared to 53% last year. This followed a trend with all agencies, with significant rises to small changes in all positive ratings. Only the Province of British Columbia has less than half of residents rating their response as positive.

| Positive Ratings             | 2017 | 2018 | Difference | 2018 Sample |
|------------------------------|------|------|------------|-------------|
| All Agencies                 | 44%  | 64%  | +20%       | n = 293     |
| Cariboo Regional District    | 53%  | 69%  | +13%       | n = 274     |
| BC Wildfire Service          | 49%  | 62%  | +13%       | n = 293     |
| Province of British Columbia | 33%  | 40%  | +7%        | n = 293     |
| Local fire departments       | 86%  | 88%  | -2%        | n = 195     |
| RCMP                         | 72%  | 69%  | -3%        | n = 222     |
| Search & Rescue              | 80%  | 74%  | -6%        | n = 144     |
| Canadian Red Cross           | 53%  | 58%  | +5%        | n = 192     |

Compared to last year's wildfires, how do you feel about the overall response by:

|                              | Much/better | Same | Much/worse | 2018 Sample |
|------------------------------|-------------|------|------------|-------------|
| All agencies                 | 46%         | 40%  | 14%        | n = 243     |
| Cariboo Regional District    | 41%         | 49%  | 9%         | n = 243     |
| CRD Communications           | 44%         | 44%  | 12%        | n = 224     |
| BC Wildfire Service          | 43%         | 38%  | 19%        | n = 243     |
| Province of British Columbia | 26%         | 47%  | 27%        | n = 243     |
| RCMP                         | 32%         | 62%  | 6%         | n = 243     |
| Canadian Red Cross           | 24%         | 65%  | 9%         | n = 150     |
| Emergency Social Services    | 37%         | 52%  | 10%        | n = 140     |



Above: Wildfire Overview Map, August 1, 2018 1700H

The survey was available through SurveyMonkey.com from 20 September to 1 October 2018.  
Margin of error of +/- 6% with a 95% confidence level. n=243



|  | Wildfires 2017 | Floods 2018 | Wildfires 2018 |
|--|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| New Emergency Notification Subscribers | 9,639          | N/A         | 2,908          |
| Media releases                         | 122            | 12          | 79             |
| Facebook reach                         | 5,927,229      | 258,833     | 750,119        |
| Videos                                 | 103            | -           | 20             |
| Minutes of video watched               | 1,029,422      | -           | 58,300         |
| Completed surveys                      | 1,209          | N/A         | 293            |

Other social media (outside of the CRD channels) continues to be a significant source for communications, with 63% receiving information this way. Radio stations have the largest reach of traditional media at 41% (49% in 2017), followed by newspaper 27% (17% in 2017) and television at 22% (28% in 2017).

Friend, family or neighbours continue to be a source for information for 44% of residents, matching last year's results.

74% have a mobile phone (56% with data plans) as compared to 58% with landlines (mobile has remained consistent, with a 5% drop in landlines over the past year). The Internet is accessed by a high-speed connection by 64% of residents, with another 33% by low speed or satellite. Cable television has seen a drop from 39% to 32% of residents over the last year, while newspaper delivery has dropped to only 21% of residents. In summary, CRD social media is the dominant means of communication for residents.

77% of residents who completed the survey have some college or higher education, which is higher than Statistics Canada data for the region. The largest single occupation identified by respondents was retired (29%).

Notable is that 10% fewer residents indicated they receive emergency notifications compared to last year's 47%, while there was actually a 20% increase in subscribers to 2,908 when compared to the end of last year's wildfire season. The service provides instant notifications during emergencies via text, phone and/or email. A total of 14,599 are now subscribed, compared to only 2,052 prior to the 2017 wildfires.



## Impacts on Residents

37% of respondents indicated they spent time on evacuation alert, meaning respondents were more likely impacted than the overall population. 27% were not impacted, 15% experienced a financial loss as a business, and 13% lost hunting/trapping land. Overall, 24% said they were impacted financially by the wildfires.

Smoke and the impact on health was noted by 46% of respondents, which heavily impacted much of the region for significant periods this summer.

Mental health dropped slightly as a result of the wildfires. Last year residents said their mental health was 8.7/10 on average prior to the wildfires, which dipped to 7.8/10 this year. Residents rated the impact of their overall mental health as a result of the wildfires at 5/10 which was similar to last year's 5.6/10, although significantly fewer residents were directly impacted by wildfires this year compared to last. A similar response was seen in how residents felt about the future, with a 7/10 in 2017 and 2018. Residents rated their mental health today at 7.6/10 which is very similar to last year's 8/10. Comments provided showed greater anxiety and fear related to this year's wildfires.

Socially, residents indicated a slight decrease in their social activities from 4.7/10 in 2017 to 4/10 in 2018. Of concern, 14% more people avoid public settings compared to last year (24% in 2017 to 37% in 2018). Similarly, financial, social and mental unmet needs have increased 12% since last year, which should also be considered as part of recovery planning. (26% in 2017 to 38% in 2018) (n = 253 in 2018)

The financial impact on residents has increased from 1.5/10 impact last year to 2.1/10 this year, although 2.2/10 were worried about their ability to survive the next six months, which is similar to last year, this number has been unchanged which should be noted for recovery planning.

Post-wildfire last year, residents rated their mental health at 8/10 which aligned with this year's 7.6/10.

27% of residents felt evacuations made more sense compared to last year, with 58% feeling they were about the same. 72% felt evacuations were kept in place either an appropriate amount of time or not long enough, with 28% believing they were in place a bit too long or much too long. 85% felt highway closures were kept to a minimum (no highways were closed during this summer's wildfires, however other roadways were closed). 21% of residents had animals impacted by the wildfires.



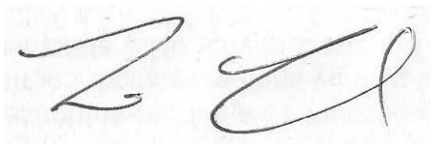
*Above: Video update from 1 August 2018, the most watched video during the wildfire season with over 15,000 views.*

## Conclusion

When looking at this year's events and the little time between completing wrap-up of last year's record season which concluded with significant community consultation and report, there was little time to make significant improvements before the next two disasters gripped the region from April to September. Regardless, improvements have been noted by residents in many areas under the Cariboo Regional District responsibilities. Greater focus on tackling recommendations which are a priority and those that are easier to attain will likely result in greater improvement in resident feedback.

I commend the Cariboo Regional District for any progress they have made, despite being challenged by numerous disasters, they have become known across Canada for their superior efforts to improve communications in disasters. Provincially, they are acknowledged as a strong example for permitting for agriculture and access as well as limiting the impact on residents who are under an evacuation order or alert.

Much obliged,



Tim S. Conrad, APR®

Principal Consultant

Butterfly Effect Communications | Marketing | Strategy

[tim@butterflyeffectcommunications.ca](mailto:tim@butterflyeffectcommunications.ca)

M: 587.343.6996

## Attachments:

[2017 Wildfire Report](#) (46 pages, 8.2MB) PDF (link)

[2017 Wildfire Report Appendix](#) (306 pages, 12.5MB) PDF (link)

2018 Survey Results (document)

- Note: Due to small sample size, the following questions did not have adequate response to produce accurate results and were not analyzed – 10, 11, 12, 13, 39, 40