
Emergency Preparedness Recommendations - Priority Actions – Jan 2019

CRD Emergency Preparedness Committee Priority Actions – Status Update

Theme 1: Community coordination & communication - Community Liaisons

Status – January 2019

This communications coordination and improvement concept requires additional resources to achieve, including: staffing for concept development, implementation and monitoring for evaluation and long-term maintenance of volunteer management, retention and program success.

Learning from the 2018 wildfire season indicates that this approach will also require additional EOC staffing to communicate and support the program concept, reinforcing the need for pre-season communications, program planning, education and follow up to adequately resource the EOC, the CRD, and communities for program success.

- ✓ Initial steps toward achieving this approach have been moving forward including funding and installation of some community bulletin boards. In addition, several community meetings have been held and channels for liaison identification and coordination have been initiated by Area Directors since 2018.
- ✓ Long term funding for staffing volunteer management, emergency preparedness education, program evaluation and management remains an identified challenge but is not a barrier to program development or initiation in the short term.
- ✓ A funding application to Canadian Red Cross for the Community Liaison program has been submitted and is in progress. Anticipating funding by summer 2019 for full program development and implementation.

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 and communication 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 activities 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 environments change.
- Work to enhance coordination with local incident command and local response activity information exchange with CRD EOC during emergency events.
- Community liaisons to be supported with 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

Status – January 2019

- ✓ Internal CRD staff EOC Spring Flood debrief was completed on June 2018. An external debrief with key EOC section leads and Ministry of Environment, Water Stewardship, Water Authorizations Section Head held in July 2018. Feedback from both sessions has been correlated and documented for CRD lessons learned and adaptation going forward.
- ✓ Since fall of 2017 significant broadcast, presentation and delivery of information to communities about CRD order and alert processes, emergency preparedness at the community/household level, FireSmart, Emergency Notification System, and other resources to support self sufficiency and resiliency have been shared via the CRD. These channels include: CRD website, social media, newsletters, traditional media, envelope stuffers, community presentations, interagency public events in Quesnel, Williams Lake and 100 Mile House since November 2017 by CRD Recovery Manager, Manager of Communications, Manager of Protective Services and several Area Directors.
- ✓ Planning for pre-2019 fire season engagement with volunteer response agencies (Volunteer Fire Departments and Central Cariboo Search and Rescue) about the importance of Critical Incident Stress debrief post-response to reduce mental health impacts and illnesses. Peer-to-peer debrief concept is under development.

Concept: Mental health and wellness needs are documented to increase after disasters. Provide supports to workers, volunteers 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, recovery resources and changing climate impacts to increase self reliance and reduce confusion and anxiety.

Theme 3: Improved permit processes

Status – January 2019

- ✓ The 2018 Spring Flood and 2018 Wildfire season both saw significant improvement to the permit process on the part of the CRD EOC. By installing agricultural liaisons in the EOC early on, the permit process supported the agricultural sector in a more timely manner and coordinated better outcomes overall.

It is the Manager of Protective Services' perspective that the pre-permit/pre-qualification recommendation requires more consideration from an all-hazard emergency management lens to determine the risks and safety of this concept before actioning.

2018 wildfire season EOC activation implemented lessons learned from 2017, and changes to the processes and outcomes appeared satisfactory to stakeholders/CRD.

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

Status – January 2019

- ✓ CRD MOPS promoted and assisted sign up with Emergency Notification System at four spring 2018 community events. An increase in requests for Emergency Notification System sign up occurred during the 2018 Wildfire season (MOPS departmental tracking). This program has been well received and used by regional residents.
- ✓ Conducted Information Officer, Operations and Planning, EOC Essentials courses and hosted an EOC training exercise through JIBC for CRD staff. EOC members from other local governments and First Nations participated in these courses.
- ✓ The EOC Information Section conducted two in-house training and planning sessions ahead of the 2018 wildfire season.
- ✓ Spring 2018 education and training for elected officials completed by CRD CAO.
- ✓ EMBC Regional Spring Readiness stakeholder meeting planning and scheduling underway January 2019.
- ✓ Additional resources required for broader stakeholder engagement and training can be achieved through the Community Liaison program.

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 stakeholder partnership development to support EOC functions, staffing and response coordination in-line with 2017 lessons learned.

Theme 5: Communication coordination to increase resiliency

Status – January 2019

- ✓ Initial feedback gained through email/face to face communications, and the emergency public information line indicate that the communications approaches implemented through the 2018 Spring Flood and the 2018 Wildfire season achieved the improvements in communications as planned.
- ✓ A survey based on the 2017 post-wildfire survey was launched to provide feedback post 2018 wildfire season and to compare 2017 to 2018 lessons learned for ongoing evaluation and adjustments going forward.
- ✓ The crisis communications plan has been developed and is being actioned as necessary.

Additional emergency preparedness and planning engagement strategies: Ham Radio use in the EOC, guides for first responders, internet upgrades and CRD Business Registry require additional resources to achieve.

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).
- Develop 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.
- Establish a CRD Business Registry to disseminate resource information during emergency events to assist early recovery and communication coordination.

Theme 6: Promoting a culture of preparedness

Status – January 2019

- ✓ The CRD implemented the waste reduction support program in the spring of 2018 by waiving tipping fees for residential yard waste at all CRD landfill sites, \$1,200,000.00 has been requested from the Canadian Red Cross to support program success.
 - ✓ CRD promoted and staff participated in spring Recovery & Preparedness community events in Wells, Quesnel, 100 Mile House and Williams Lake in 2018.
 - ✓ Supporting communications and promotions for the Emergency Notification System is achieving broader understanding and overall use of the system (25% increase in self-registrations since Sept. 2017; as of Sept. 2018, 24% of the CRD's population has self-registered for the system).
 - ✓ CCCTA implemented a Tourism Operator Emergency preparedness program, gap remains for targeted hobby farm communications and emergency preparedness programming and included CRD staff engagement with program coordinator to improve cross communications with stakeholders regarding emergency response planning and EOC activations.
 - ✓ The CRD is supporting the provincial EMBC Spring Readiness symposium in Williams Lake March 5, 2019.
 - ✓ Planning underway for CRD community level emergency preparedness communication and education 2019.
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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.
 - Support broad promotion of FireSmart principles and encourage activities on private properties.
- Promote consistent and reliable CRD communication systems to build trust that the regional district will communicate needed information throughout an emergency.
 - Enhance public education with respect to necessary preparations and processes to improve response to evacuation alerts and orders and to enhance community preparedness and resiliency.
- 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 improvements

Status – January 2019

- ✓ Some communication improvements met including EOC Operations section maintained a dedicated phone line and regular (daily) communications with VFDs and incorporation of several lessons learned from internal EOC debrief.
- ✓ The current EOC communications section achieved many of the following goals through positioning along the outer edge of the Director (as recommended) and increasing staffing at a critical phase of activation, reducing pressures on the section and increasing section effectiveness and efficiency.

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 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.

Theme 8: Cross regional/government collaboration

Status – January 2019

- ✓ November 2018 CRD staff participation in Williams Lake EOC table top exercise.
- ✓ Municipal and Regional staff collaboration on EOC training planning for 2019.
- ✓ Municipal, First Nations and CRD staff engagement with Municipal and First Nations Community Wildfire Protection Planning projects underway and in the planning stages.
- ✓ CRD application to UBCM Community Resiliency Investment funding of \$100,000 for Community Wildfire Protection plan for unincorporated CRD areas to close planning gaps.
- ✓ Inter Regional staffing support provided for EOC activation (PPRD) in the fall of 2018.
- ✓ Successful integration of, and communication with, external agencies (EMBC, BCWS, RCMP, MOA, MFLNRORD, First Nations Liaison, Cattlemen's Association, MOTI, City of Williams Lake) throughout 2018 wildfire EOC activation.

Concept: Work to build relationships with other jurisdictions, local governments and stakeholder agencies to refine emergency response, process and planning.

- Develop and document clear processes to establish and rescind alerts and orders with other key stakeholder agencies and local governments.
- Work collaboratively with agencies such as RCMP and regional Search and Rescue to develop clear and agreed upon roles and approaches to evacuations and practiced to familiarize teams with responsibility and expected actions.

- Work closely with other adjacent regional districts to enhance collaboration during emergencies including collaborative jurisdictional exercises. Consider a process where staff resources can be shared during single activations to allow cross pollination of information and processes to improve coordination in larger events.
- Relationships with First Nations should be developed and enhanced to incorporate First Nations in regional planning and preparedness efforts and include joint exercises with EMBC to support First Nations preparedness and response under the new agreement with the federal government.
- 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 and make improvements.

Theme 9: Supporting emergency social services

Status – January 2019

- ✓ Working to identify and achieve resources to augment ESS programing and opportunities across the region by engaging current ESS volunteers and others to grow capacity
- ✓ Working with EMBC to coordinate provincial ESS program changes with local stakeholders.

Concept: ESS is a critical service, requiring enhanced supports to assist volunteer engagement and retention to achieve long term sustainability.

- Work to enhance ESS capability in rural areas through community volunteer initiatives to support their communities in the event of emergencies and provide link to CRD EOC.
 - Local resources can add depth for the region as a whole as ESS volunteers in unaffected areas can be drawn on to impacted areas through regional response.