

Emergency Preparedness Recommendations - Priority Actions – Feb 2019

CRD Emergency Preparedness Committee Priority Actions – Status Update

Theme 1: Community coordination & communication - Community Liaisons

Status – February 2019

- ✓ The final 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 – February 2019

- ✓ CRD Manager of Protective Services attended the First Responder Mental Health Conference to source out resources for supporting regional volunteer First Responder agencies and members. Several options are under consideration and staff are seeking funding to support additional training across the region to develop a peer to peer debrief program to foster resiliency long term.

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 – February 2019

- ✓ Pre-permit/pre-qualification recommendations challenge all-hazard emergency management due to the potential risks associated with this concept. The Emergency Preparedness Committee recommends that priority actions will reflect better permit process communications and remove actions to pre-qualify people/businesses to reduce risks.

2018 wildfire season EOC activation implemented lessons learned from 2017, and changes to the processes and outcomes appeared satisfactory to stakeholders/CRD and informs future actions and interagency communications and planning.

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

- 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.

- During emergencies, permits should be accessible at various locations, potentially including all CRD offices and community liaisons.
- Include process for permits in EOC communications.

Theme 4: Coordinated and targeted education & training

Status – February 2019

- ✓ Spring 2019 education and training for elected officials in the planning stages by CRD CAO and Manager of Protective Services.
- ✓ EMBC Regional Spring Readiness stakeholder meeting planning and scheduled for March 2019. Save the date shared out with regional agencies: ESS, SAR, VFDs, etc. to ensure inclusion.
- ✓ 2019 EOC training coordinated by the CRD includes Rapid Damage Assessment to aid in re-entry and EOC Finance Section. Information shared out to municipalities and First Nations to share knowledge and cross train.
- ✓ Training session for BC Wildfire and CRD EOC staff is underdevelopment for a spring table top exercise to promote interagency communication and understanding.
- ✓ CRD to host EMBC sponsored EOC training in April for Emergency Evacuations.
- ✓ Additional resources required for broader stakeholder engagement and information coordination may 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 – February 2019

- ✓ CRD new EOC to have space for HAM radio operations to support communications during emergencies.

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 – February 2019

- ✓ The CRD is supporting the provincial EMBC Spring Readiness symposium in Williams Lake March 5, 2019 by funding the venue.

- ✓ 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 – February 2019

- ✓ The CRD is building a dedicated EOC for future events.
 - ✓ UBCM funding application for EOC IT equipment submitted February 1.
 - ✓ CRD staff planning and coordinating cross agency EOC training to support rotating trained staff to ensure breaks are given during activations.
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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 coordination

Status – February 2019

- ✓ CRD staff participating in interagency meetings with MOTI/FLRNO/BCWS/EMBC/MOE and BC Parks for pre-event planning and coordination.

- ✓ CRD staff participated in City of Williams Lake preparedness meeting at the end of January to share out planning goals and hear back from other agencies/communities.
- ✓ Staff participating in cross regional ESS survey to support ESS volunteers with lessons learned through 2017/18.

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 – February 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/improvements 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.