

Emergency Preparedness Committee Brief, January 2023

BC Emergency Program Act Modernization

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Background

The ***United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*** 2015-2030 was endorsed by Canada and 186 other countries in March 2015.

B.C. adopted this framework in 2018 as a means of modernizing the Emergency Program Act, aligning the province with international best practices for managing emergencies.

The Modernized Emergency Program Act is understood to include principles and themes from the Sendai Agreement and the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*, the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, and the *Draft Principles that Guide the Province's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples*.

The move to modernization also intends to incorporate lessons learned from the *COVID-19 pandemic*, the unprecedented *flood and wildfire seasons of 2017 and 2018*, and all four phases of emergency management – ***mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery***.

BC Emergency Program Act Modernization Themes

- Disaster Risk Reduction
- Resilience Building
- Climate Adaptation and Readiness
- All of Society Approach

The application of these themes through the modernization of the Emergency Program Act, associated regulations, and policies, suggests that there will be specific emphasis on:

- The importance of disaster risk reduction through the four phases of emergency management - mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery
- Recognition of the importance of Indigenous rights in relation to emergency management
- Consideration of the impacts of climate change in risk assessments
- The definition of emergency will be broadened to include security threats such as terrorism, transmissible diseases, or toxins, and impacts to cultural sites
- New Legislative Tools & Powers
- Critical Infrastructure Owner roles in disaster risk reduction & emergency management
- Compliance & Enforcement
- Updates to existing regulations and creating new regulations

Implications

With regulations, guidelines, and acts change, it requires time and resources to track, read and understand the new requirements. Additionally, CRD plans, policies, procedures, and training programs will have to be developed/updated to ensure compliance with new requirements and to ensure we are able to enforce the new regulations effectively.

Some examples include:

- New responsibilities for Local Authorities to prepare and maintain a risk assessment for hazards within their jurisdiction
- Requirement that emergency management plans must reflect all four phases of emergency management, evacuation of people and animals, consideration of populations that might be disproportionately affected and cultural safety.
- Preparation and maintenance of a business continuity plan
- Changes to the procedures and processes for certain activities-Example - Reporting to the Minister on the use of Recovery Transition Period (RTP) powers.

The Modernized Act may require Local Authorities to consult and cooperate with Indigenous Governing Bodies throughout the process of emergency management planning, including risk assessment development, evacuation planning, response and recovery phases- this requires planning, resources and an overall CRD strategy for FN engagement.

The pressure to apply for grants to be eligible for further grants can be challenging, as it requires committing resources and effort to a specific initiative or project, even if it may not be a priority for the Regional District. For example, the UBCM's CRI application for Fire Smart and Wildfire Risk Reduction is a priority initiative for the province in their Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy, but it may not necessarily be a priority for the Region.

Additional Resources

Modernized emergency management legislation:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/emergency-management/legislation-and-regulations/modernizing-epa>