



BRITISH COLUMBIA WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE FIRE CONSEQUENCE MANAGEMENT PLAN (2008)



Ministry of Forests & Range/Protection Branch
Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General/
Emergency Management British Columbia/
Provincial Emergency Program
and
Office of the Fire Commissioner

**This plan replaces all previous versions,
including the BC Wildland Urban Interface Fire
Consequence Management Plan
Interim 2002 Edition.**

**This plan identifies the intended actions to be
taken in the management of the consequences
of a wildland urban interface fire.**

May 2008

Forward



Effective response to a significant wildland urban interface fire requires coordination of not only the agencies responsible for fire control, but of the agencies engaged in managing the consequences of such events.

The BC Wildland Urban Interface Fire Consequence Management Plan represents a tripartite agreement between the Protection Branch, Ministry of Forest and Range, the Provincial Emergency Program and the Officer of the Fire Commissioner, Emergency Management British Columbia, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General defining an integrated collaborative approach to managing the consequences of wildland urban interface fire events in British Columbia.

We, the undersigned, adopt this Plan as a framework that defines each organization's roles and responsibilities with respect to mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery efforts as they relate to the wildland urban interface fire hazard in British Columbia.

Approved by the undersigned this date, 26 of May, 2008

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cam Filmer'.

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Rebecca Denlinger
Fire Commissioner
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Section 1

Introduction



The British Columbia Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Fire Consequence Management Plan describes the provincial government's strategy for an integrated provincial mitigation/prevention, preparedness, response and recovery strategy specific to the consequences as a result of significant wildland urban interface fires impacting British Columbia. It sets out a concept of operations that fosters cooperation and collaboration among multiple organizations active in managing the consequences of wildland urban interface fire, including governments at all levels, community and regional services, non-governmental organizations and individuals.

Purpose of Plan

The Plan represents a tripartite collaboration involving the Provincial Emergency Program (PEP) and the Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC), branches of Emergency Management BC (EMBC), Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (PSSG) and the Protection Branch, Ministry of Forests and Range (MFR).

As a provincial document, this Plan focuses on the roles and responsibilities of provincial agencies in mitigating, planning for and responding to wildland urban interface fires, and augments existing emergency response provisions among BC ministries and Crown corporations. However, the Plan also serves as an information resource for our partners in emergency response. Although each may have its own plan for wildland urban interface fire response, all organizations with roles in response are encouraged to draw principles and guidance from the concepts presented here.

Plan Description

The Plan contains three descriptive sections.

The introduction in the first section provides a recent history of significant wildland urban interface fires and their varying consequences; the purpose and authority for the plan; and how the plan will be maintained.

Section 2.0 presents the framework used by each of the co-signatories of this plan, to manage response to and reduce the impacts of wildland interface fire events. The framework is based on the four pillars of emergency management, prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

Section 3.0 provides a general overview of the various activities that may be undertaken during wildland urban interface fire events by other organizations at all levels of government and the private sector including utilities and transportation service providers.

Also to support each section there are numerous references including legislation, British Columbia Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS) overview, various operational guidelines, the BC Communications Action Plan and the glossary of acronyms and terms.

Background

The wildland urban interface is defined as the area where structures and other human development meet and intermix with wildland areas containing flammable vegetation (trees, bushes, grasses). A fire occurring in this area is called an interface fire.

Wildland urban interface fires are most likely to occur in the province during the period from May through September. BC experiences on average, approximately 2,000 wildfires annually and although only a small percentage of them are in interface areas, the impacts can be devastating as demonstrated by the following examples:

1994 – Garnet Fire, Penticton

- Over 5,500 hectares were burned
- Over 3,500 people were evacuated
- 18 homes and structures were lost
- The fact that the fire occurred in an interface area increased the severity of the damage

1998 – Salmon Arm Fire

- It burned over 6,000 hectares of land
- Approximately 7,000 people were evacuated
- 40 buildings were destroyed
- Costs to extinguish were over \$10 million

the area where structures and other human development meet and intermix with wildland areas

May through September

2003 – Firestorm, McLure Fire

- Devastating loss or damage of 72 homes and nine businesses
- 3,800 people were evacuated (880 of these people were also evacuated for a second time) from the small communities of McLure, Barriere and Louis Creek
- The McLure fire reached a final size of 26,420 hectares

2003 – Firestorm, Okanagan Mountain Fire

- 2003 firestorm was the most significant wildland urban interface fire event in BC history
- Although there were many interface fires throughout the province, the Okanagan Mountain Fire was the worst
- The communities of Naramata and Kelowna suffered the largest effect when the blaze caused the evacuation of 33,050 people (4,050 of these people were also evacuated for a second time)
- 238 homes were destroyed
- The fire also claimed 12 wooden trestles and damaged two other steel trestles in the historic Myra Canyon
- The fire reached 25,600 hectares in size

2004 – Kotcho Lake Fire, Fort Nelson

- Oil and gas operations were shut down, when crews evacuated from the area
- The shut down resulted in economic losses estimated at \$10 million/day over 11 days
- The fire threatened oil and gas assets including tank farms for oil and by-products, production, exploration sites and collection pipelines for oil and gas
- Severe environmental impacts would have resulted if one of the oil/gas facilities had been damaged or destroyed

2006 – Tumbler Ridge Fire

- The entire community of 3,500 residents were ordered to evacuate under a Declaration of a State of Local Emergency
- The fire grew to 11,000 hectares in a few short hours and came within five kilometres (km) of town
- Oil and gas operations were shut down for approximately two weeks resulting in significant economic impact

Legal Authority to Plan

Authority for the province to plan for and respond to wildland urban interface fires resides within the:

- [BC Wildfire Act](#)
- [BC Wildfire Regulations](#)
- [BC Fire Services Act](#)
- [Emergency Program Act](#)
- [Emergency Program management Regulation](#)
- [Local Authority Emergency management Regulation](#)

The Acts and regulations specify the roles of BC ministries, as well as the responsibilities of local authorities in BC for overall emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

Section 2

Emergency Management Pillars



2.1 Prevention/Mitigation

Prevention programs designed to prevent or mitigate the effects of wildland urban interface fires include measures such as fuel management, public education, legislation, and insurance incentives and disincentives. Fire bans and forest use restrictions may be imposed if conditions meet specific thresholds.

Fuel management is defined as the process of reducing fuel load in the forest (thinning, spacing, pruning and removal of debris from the forest floor) to diminish aggressive fire behaviour and the potential for devastating wildfires. The Ministry of Forests and Range funds a fuel management program that is administered by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). A partnership with First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS) has been formed to provide program delivery to First Nations communities. One of the priorities is to focus on treating forests adjacent to communities with [mountain pine beetle](#) affected stands.

The MFR [Community Wildfire Protection Program](#) assists communities to develop plans to improve fire prevention/protection in interface areas, improve community safety and reduce the risk of property damage. The program is funded by the MFR and administered by the UBCM. Local authorities can apply for funding to develop their Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

UBCM owns three Community Structure Protection Unit (SPU) trailers which are strategically based throughout BC. These units are jointly managed under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Office of the Fire Commissioner, and the Ministry of Forests and Range. The SPU's are designed to minimize structure damage from wildland urban interface fire. OFC provides the expertise and site assessment to determine appropriate actions. SPU's may be deployed during an interface fire to dampen roofs and areas around structures, to help prevent sparks and embers from igniting structural fires. One UBCM owned SPU contains about 350 sprinklers and can protect between 30 and 50 homes.

Community Structure
Protection Unit (SPU)
trailers

Numerous communities have created their own structure protection units and trained their fire departments in the deployment of the units for the purpose of protecting interface areas within their own fire protection districts.

The [FireSmart](#) program, lead by OFC and MFR, outlines proactive prevention measures that can be taken by homeowners and communities to reduce their risk and exposure to wildfires. The [FireSmart](#) program encourages community-based initiatives to reduce the risk of fire losses, such as incorporating municipal bylaws and architectural standards that discourage the use of flammable building materials, and enhance safety in the wildland urban interface.

Fire insurance is readily available to individuals and businesses throughout the province. For those located in areas that are outside of a fire protection district, the risk of loss due to fire is increased, which in turn results in higher insurance premiums.

As Disaster Financial Assistance is not provided to individuals and businesses for losses sustained due to wildland urban interface fire events, it is a best practice for individuals and businesses to purchase adequate insurance to cover such losses.

2.2 Preparedness

Individuals and emergency management stakeholders must be ready to act effectively should a wildland urban interface fire occur. Measures include development and maintenance of emergency plans, mutual aid agreements, resource inventories, training exercises and emergency communications systems. While emergency management planning is ongoing, readiness activities are increased prior to fire season and when significant fire risk is identified.

Through the PEP website, a [community planning tool kit](#) provides local authorities with information on how to establish and/or review their emergency program, how to conduct a hazard, risk and vulnerability analysis (HRVA) and how to evaluate their communities' capacity to manage emergencies.

FireSmart

fire insurance readily available

community planning tool kit

PEP holds, in conjunction with MFR and OFC, annual seasonal readiness workshops for local authorities, First Nations and regional response agencies to provide education on the fire risk and the provincial framework for integrated emergency management. PEP also hosts Elected Officials Workshops following each local government election in various areas of the province. Community capacity reviews, including [Emergency Social Services \(ESS\)](#), are conducted by regional staff and emergency contact lists are updated. PEP liaises with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS) to engage First Nations communities in readiness activities. PEP provides training to [Temporary Emergency Assignment Management System \(TEAMS\)](#) members and volunteers in advance of fire season. Public information material is developed and/or reviewed and posted on the PEP website. PEP interacts with subject matter experts including representatives from government, industry and volunteer groups undertaking provincial readiness activities including: animal welfare, health, transportation, recovery, government services, communications, evacuation planning, critical infrastructure, utilities and oil & gas sector issues.

Ministry of Forest and Range assesses the fire risk across the province. Fire danger ratings are identified by collection of data from various weather stations throughout the province. MFR [Protection Branch](#) maintains an extensive website to inform the public of current fire hazard ratings and other wildfire information. MFR Fire Centres will liaise with local fire services prior to fire season to establish reporting protocols and criteria for requesting assistance. Other seasonal preparedness activities conducted by MFR include: hiring/recalling/training personnel, updating operational guidelines, reviewing agreements, fire equipment refurbishing, acquiring seasonal vehicles and aircraft contract management.

Each fire season, the OFC provides Structure Protection Specialists to assist MFR Protection during WUI fires and prepares SPU contract crews each spring with a two day boot camp covering safety, strategy and tactics. The Office of the Fire Commissioner also supports local fire services to improve local planning and response effectiveness. The S-115 (Structure and site preparation training) was developed to enable local fire services to train their own personnel to a Provincial standard when using SPU trailer resources.

The Central Coordination Group (CCG) comprising ministries and agencies, with specific roles for wildland urban interface fire response, convenes prior to each fire season to provide strategic information to senior officials and direction to provincial emergency management stakeholders.

2.3 Response

Wildfire occurrence, intensity, and damage during the 2003 Fire Season was unprecedented with all provincial emergency response agencies fully committed in support of provincial operations. As well, a significant mobilization of structural fire fighting resources was undertaken to address the large number of serious fires within interface areas. 2,000 Canadian Forces troops assisted as well.

The 2003 wildfires provided important experiences and lessons for the Province's fire control and emergency response agencies. The [British Columbia Provincial Firestorm 2003 Review](#), conducted by Gary Filmon, examined a number of fire events and provided valuable guidance to mitigate the impact of future interface fires.

This plan is the framework for integrated response adopted by the province to address significant wildland urban interface fire events. The concept of operations sets out how decisions about provincial coordination will be made and communicated, how information and resources will flow to support response activities between agencies and how critical resources will be accessed when needed.

BCERMS and ICS

The concept of operations for wildland urban interface fire response reflects the current standards as defined in the [British Columbia Emergency Response Management System \(BCERMS\)](#). The principals of BCERMS are:

- Use of the Incident Command System (ICS)
- Use of Common Terms
- Span of Control
- Management by Objectives and Action Plans
- Operational Periods
- Unity and Chain of Command, Unified Command

Central Coordination
Group (CCG)

2003 Fire Season

BCERMS is the management system of choice by the BC government and it acknowledges the primary role of local authorities and specific provincial ministries in leading emergency response activities. The provincial and federal governments support efforts by local authorities to protect their citizens and communities.

BCERMS Response Goals:

- Provide for the safety and health of all responders
- Save lives
- Reduce suffering
- Protect public health
- Protect government infrastructure
- Protect property
- Protect the environment
- Reduce economic and social losses

BCERMS Levels:

Site level – one or more Incident Commanders or Incident Management Teams oversee site operations from an Incident Command Post (ICP). In some circumstances, site level response is managed by more than one responsible agency under Unified Command (U/C).

Site Support – an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) representing a local authority with jurisdiction for the affected area is activated to oversee and coordinate all non-site activities in support of the Incident Commander.

Provincial Regional Coordination – one or more of the Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centres (PREOC) located in each of the six [PEP Regions](#) will be activated to provide support and coordination to activated EOCs within their region. The PREOC will provide support when the EOC requests support, has exhausted resources or requires coordination from outside of its jurisdiction.

Provincial Central Coordination – the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) located at PEP Headquarters in Victoria will activate to support PREOCS and provide policy direction.

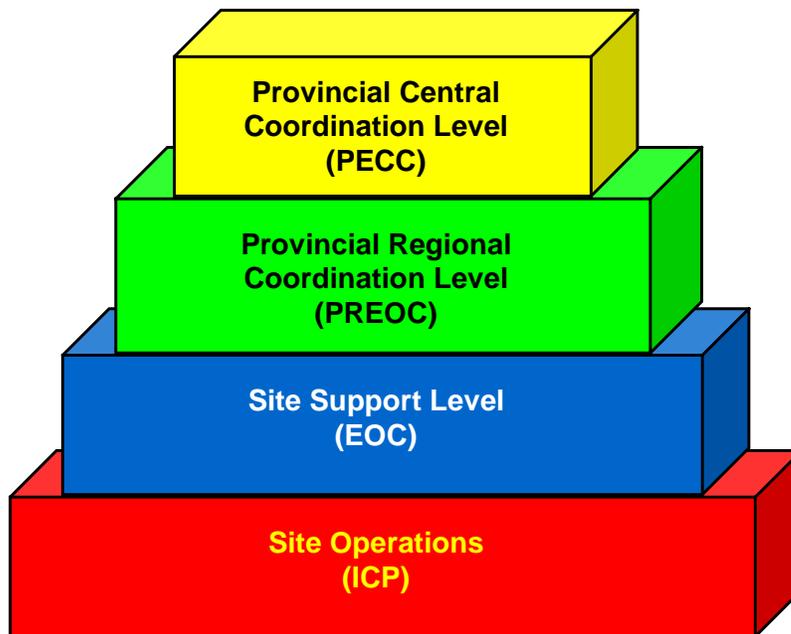


Figure 1. BCERMS Levels

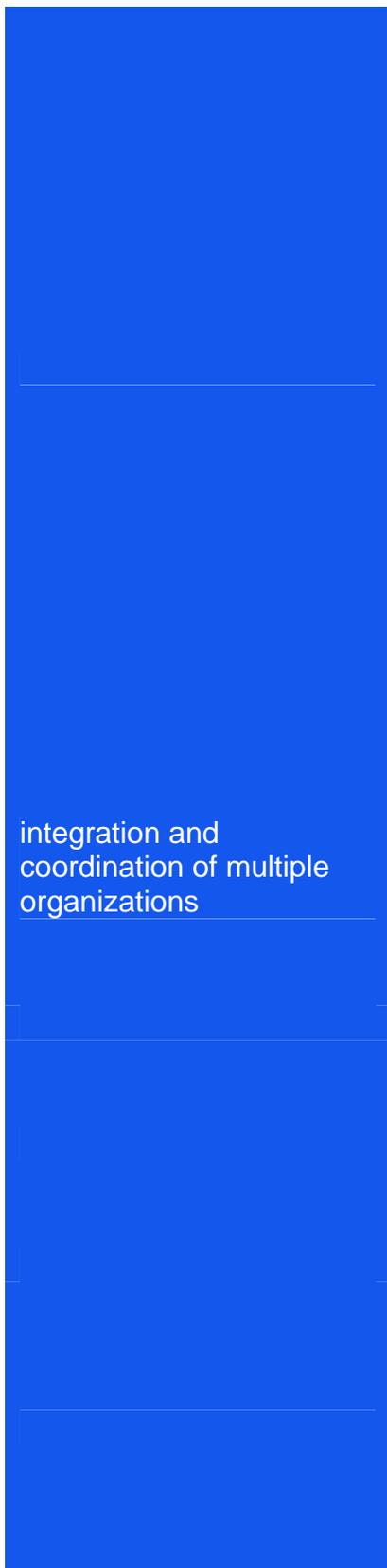
Provincial Government Response

The provincial government strategy for response to any major wildland urban interface fire event impacting BC addresses the need for integration and coordination of multiple organizations. The strategy ensures both the operations side of fire control and the consequence side of wildland fire are fully supported, including overall coordination of other provincial and national resources that may be engaged in the response effort.

Fundamental understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Local Authorities and First Nations, the Provincial Emergency Program, the Ministry of Forests and Range and the Office of the Fire Commissioner is essential to successful fire response operations, particularly when dealing with interface fires or during unified command operations.

Local Authorities

Local fire departments are responsible to extinguish all unwanted fires within their established protection areas. It is recognized that not all areas have fire departments. Local authorities determine the types of services that will be provided. For those that choose not to have local Fire Departments, there is no structural fire protection.



All local authorities are required under provincial legislation to prepare and maintain emergency plans that detail how the community will respond to known hazards including how to engage mutual aid and contingencies for external support, based upon the principles of BCERMS. Every emergency responder should be familiar with basic ICS and BCERMS concepts, particularly as they define how provincial agencies interact during emergencies. Local authorities should have developed evacuation plans and established internal and external emergency communication plans.

Local authorities will establish an Emergency Operations Centre to:

- Support site operations (one or more incident command posts)
- Coordinate external resource requirements/mutual aid
- Liaise with PREOC and other agencies as required
- Manage communications (public/media messaging/emergency radio communications)
- Coordinate multi-agency and volunteer activities
- Coordinate evacuations (Police/Search & Rescue (SAR)/ Fire Department
- Provide [Emergency Social Services](#) (ESS) to displaced residents and establish reception centre for evacuees
- Initiate and coordinate community recovery efforts

In some circumstances, local authorities may jointly manage an EOC and integrate response efforts within their area of responsibility. In other cases, local authorities have delegated their responsibilities to Regional Districts for the provision of emergency services.

If wildfires occur within a local fire protection district, the local authority is responsible for fire suppression and must assume a lead role in control operations. Upon a request from a local authority, and if resources are available, the MFR may support local authority forces. However, the MFR support will be limited to wildfire suppression and support to the OFC structural specialist for structural or values protection, not structural firefighting. On larger fires, Fire Departments are encouraged to work with MFR under Unified Command (U/C) to ensure a coordinated action plan.

Local authorities may draw on assistance from other agencies and representatives of other levels of government that operate within their jurisdiction; Emergency Services Volunteers that may provide support to local government's response activities; and other local governments through mutual aid agreements.

During emergencies, local authorities may under Section 12 of the Emergency Program Act, declare a state of local emergency to exercise emergency powers such as ordering an evacuation of residents from their homes, prohibiting travel and accessing private property when an emergency threatens lives, property or the environment within their jurisdiction.

PEP provides guidelines in the form of a [Community Response Tool Kit](#) to assist local authorities in developing their community response plans.

First Nations

Indian Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) provides support to First Nations communities for structural fire fighting services on reserve lands through the First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS). A Wildfire Suppression Agreement between MFR and INAC stipulates that MFR will provide fire suppression for wildland fires that occur on reserve lands.

Through a letter of understanding with INAC, PEP has agreed to support the provision of emergency response services to First Nations communities. This may include assisting with volunteer, municipal, provincial, federal and/or other agency support.

Provincial Emergency Program

During a significant wildland urban interface fire event, PEP's role is to ensure the consequence aspect of wildland fire is supported, while the operations side of fire is addressed by the fire control agencies. PEP will support the provincial emergency management integrated response structure by activating one or more of the six Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centres PREOC(s). Each PREOC will support local authorities and First Nations Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) and will facilitate coordination of resources through other ministries, federal agencies and non government organizations. The Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) will activate to support active PREOCs.

PEP's role is to ensure the consequence aspect of wildland fire is supported

The Protection Branch, Ministry of Forests and Range (MFR) is responsible for the management and control of unwanted wildland fire on all Crown land outside of local authority jurisdictions

Staffing of these centres will be augmented by activation of Temporary Emergency Assignment Management System (TEAMS) members and by appropriate agency representatives. TEAMS is a pool of employees from across government who have training and experience managing emergency operations and communications during disasters.

PEP Task numbers will be issued to local authorities for the purpose of tracking eligible response expenditures authorized by the PREOCs and the PECC. This includes Emergency Operations Centre activation costs.

In response to a major emergency or disaster, a provincial declaration of a state of emergency may be issued (under the Emergency Program Act). The authority for a provincial declaration rests with the Solicitor General or the Lieutenant-Governor. Although not often used in B.C., a provincially declared state of emergency can be invoked if extraordinary powers are required to respond effectively to an emergency or disaster. Large scale ordered evacuations of people, access to private property where public safety is an issue, or the movement of equipment and other resources throughout the province are the most frequently cited reasons.

Protection Branch, Ministry of Forests and Range

The Protection Branch, Ministry of Forests and Range (MFR) is responsible for the management and control of unwanted wildland fire on all Crown land outside of local authority jurisdictions. The MFR may suppress wildfires on private land or other occupied land, and may recover cost for activities. In undertaking their primary responsibility, the MFR will endeavour to prevent fires from spreading into local fire protection districts and from threatening values and human life. If wildfires occur within a local fire protection district, the local authority is responsible for fire suppression and must assume a lead role in control operations. Upon a request from a local authority, and if resources are available, the MFR may support local authority forces. However, the MFR support will be limited to wildfire suppression and support to the OFC structural specialist for structural or values protection, not structural firefighting

MFR may utilize local authority fire departments on fires outside their fire protection districts. Fire department response to these fires will occur in accordance with the authority provided by their respective local authority. If fire departments are called to respond to a wildfire outside their fire protection district on behalf of MFR, contact should be made with the nearest MFR Fire Centre, detailing fire size, location, behaviour and resources being deployed. Fire departments should confirm the protocol for response to wildfires outside their protection area with the local MFR Fire Centre.

MFR will advise the Provincial Emergency Program, local authorities and First Nations of any wildfire activity that poses a significant threat to wildland urban interface areas. Once the provincial emergency management response structure is activated the six [MFR regional fire centres](#) will liaise directly with the PREOCs and OFC as required. MFR will liaise with stakeholders through the PREOC and PECC to provide situational awareness, technical advice on fire behaviour and weather forecasts in person, if able, or via daily conference calls.

MFR is a member of the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC). Through mutual aid resource sharing agreements, BC Forest Service can obtain assistance from other provinces and territories and can assist other fire agencies as needed. BC is a co-signatory of the Northwest Wildland Fire Protection Agreement (known as the NW Compact) and the Northwest Border Arrangement which facilitates assistance in wildland fire pre-suppression and suppression between the US States of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana as well as the Canadian Provinces of Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

Protection Branch manages information through the combined efforts of Fire Centre Information Officers (FCIO), Information Teams (I-Teams) and Provincial Fire Information Officers (PFIO). As a group, they are responsible for collecting, confirming and delivering public safety and prevention messaging and timely fire information to the public, media, community stakeholders and branch headquarters. In addition, the Provincial Fire Information

Officer (PFIO) liaises with the Public Affairs Bureau, Ministry and Executive staff, the PREOC(s) and PECC as well as other agencies and manages communication resource needs for MFR communications provincially. The PFIO assimilates, confirms and condenses fire information from across the province into a daily or weekly situation report, which is distributed to media, stakeholders, other agencies and Ministry staff as needed.

As authorized under Section 13 of the Wildfire Act, MFR officials engaged in fire control activities may conduct tactical evacuations of all persons within areas specified by the officials.

Office of the Fire Commissioner

The OFC provides structure protection services to MFR using UBCM Structure Protection Units. The OFC coordinates and manages structural fire fighting resources, when requested by a local authority where mutual aid has been exhausted, and provides expertise and technical advice regarding operational standards, fire prevention and protection strategies.

Another role of the OFC is evacuation support, if Section 25 of the Fire Services Act is required. However, under normal circumstances the Incident Commander of the fire will work with the local authority, identifying the need to request strategic evacuations. If a local authority is contacted and does not have the capacity for evacuation, the Incident Commander will request an evacuation through the Provincial Emergency Program, Emergency Coordination Centre (PEP ECC) in Victoria. The PEP ECC will request the OFC to initiate the evacuation.

If the situation is significant enough to warrant a declaration of a provincial state of emergency, the Fire Commissioner will establish a Provincial Fire Department to facilitate the coordination of structural fire fighting resources throughout the province.

OFC, if able, may provide an on site representative to the EOC(s), PREOC(s) and the PECC during activations.

Tripartite Response Structure

The following diagram illustrates the relationship between PEP, MFR and OFC during an activation of the provincial emergency management structure.

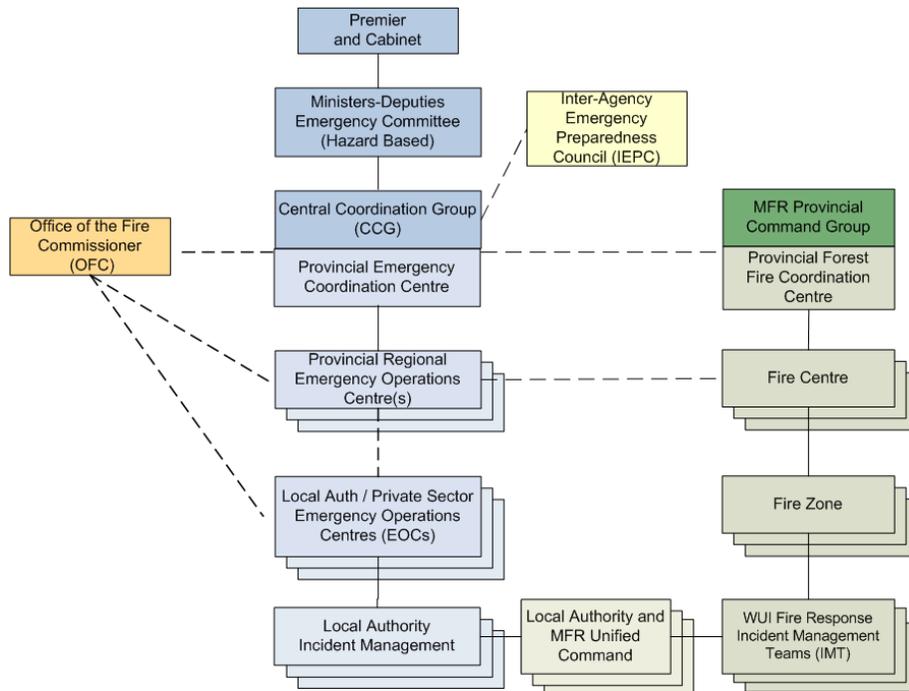


Figure 2. Tripartite Response Structure

Ministers–Deputies Emergency Committee

BCERMS provides for the establishment of a Ministers-Deputy Emergency Committee (M-DEC) composed of the key ministers and deputies who provide direction for policy and strategic decisions to the CCG for wildland urban interface fires. The M-DEC is facilitated by the Associate Deputy Minister of EMBC.

Central Coordination Group

The province will activate a Central Coordination Group (CCG) to ensure cross-government and multi-agency coordination of response activities. The CCG provides strategic and policy direction to any provincial ministries and agencies involved in the response. For Wildland urban interface fires the CCG is co-chaired by the PEP Executive Director and Director of the Forest Protection Program.

Inter-Agency Emergency Preparedness Council

The Inter-Agency Emergency Preparedness Council (IEPC) is co-chaired by the Deputy Minister of PSSG and the Associate Deputy Minister of EMBC on a permanent basis and by the representative of any other member ministry or agency (rotating on an annual basis).

Inter-Agency Emergency Preparedness Council

Provincial Central Coordination

Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) - The PECC located at PEP Headquarters in Victoria, will coordinate the integrated provincial response by supporting active PREOCs. The PECC manages the acquisition and allocation of provincial and federal resources and coordinates interagency response and communications.

MFR Provincial Command Group - the core group consists of the Director of the Protection Program, the Superintendent of Fire Operations, the Manager of Fire Operations and the Provincial Fire Control Officer. This group provides policy and strategic direction and oversees fire operations throughout the province.

Provincial Forest Fire Coordination Centre - The Provincial Forest Fire Coordination Centre (PFFCC) currently located in Victoria, provides coordination of critical resources and maintains line authority on behalf of the Director of the Protection Program over the Fire Centres when required. The PFFCC is responsible for activation of inter-provincial, federal and international wildland fire resource sharing agreements and will maintain linkage to the PECC and the OFC.

Office of the Fire Commissioner – The Fire Commissioner will ensure extraordinary requests for structural fire resources to support local authority fire services is coordinated and prioritized as warranted by conditions or fire activity throughout the province. The Fire Commissioner is a member of the CCG for wildland urban interface fires and will liaise with the PECC and the PFFCC as required.

Provincial Regional Coordination

Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centres - Each active PREOC supports the affected local authorities by sharing information, filling requests for resources, and advising on key decisions. The PREOC will deploy and coordinate provincial, federal, and international resources required for managing the consequences of the fire and will liaise with the PECC to identify requirements and resource availability. The PREOC interacts with the Fire Centre within their area of jurisdiction and with the OFC.

Fire Centres - There are Fire Centres located in six regions throughout the province. Each Fire Centre is responsible for fire dispatch and wildland fire fighting operations within their operational areas. Each Fire Centre is divided into Zones and within each zone there are one or more attack bases. Fire fighters are dispatched from the bases, which are strategically located throughout the province. Fire Centres may coordinate multiple Incident Management Team(s) at site level. The Fire Centres will liaise with the PREOC and OFC.

Office of the Fire Commissioner – Fire Service Advisors are located in Prince George, Kamloops, Cranbrook and Victoria. They are a resource to local government fire departments, Local Assistants to the Fire Commissioner and the public. The OFC may interact at the regional level through the PREOCs and the Fire Centres if warranted.

2.4 Recovery

Public safety and community well-being are responsibilities of all levels of government. In British Columbia however, as throughout Canada, primary responsibility for community recovery rests with the local authority. A [Community Recovery Tool Kit](#) is available on the PEP website to assist local authorities in developing their community recovery programs.

Local authorities may require the assistance of the province if recovery from a major emergency or disaster exceeds the capacity of local resources. Provincial recovery support is facilitated through centralized coordination of the numerous stakeholders involved in the provision of recovery services.

Under Part 3 of the [Compensation and Disaster Financial Assistance \(C & DFA\) Regulation](#), PEP is authorized to assist local authorities with eligible cost associated with recovery in order to rebuild and restore communities after an emergency or disaster. First Nations in BC qualify for federal assistance. Through an agreement with INAC, claims and payments are administered through PEP for First Nations in the same manner as for local authorities. [A Financial Assistance Guide for Emergency Response and Recovery Costs](#) was developed for local authorities and First Nations and is available on the PEP website.

Public safety and community well-being are responsibilities of all levels of government

Section 3

Other Support Organizations



Ministry of Transportation (MOT) authorize the closure of any provincial transportation routes, including highways and inland ferries, where the safety of the public is at risk (for example: poor visibility due to smoke and/or threat of wildland interface fire). MOT can assist during wildland urban interface fires by providing transportation route information on the [Drive BC](#) website and posting advisories on electronic overhead message signs along designated routes. MFR has an agreement with MOT to provide traffic control services during fire operations, through highways maintenance contractors.

Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB) provide GIS service and mapping support through the provincial emergency management structure which may be resourced with ILMB GIS staff that are PEP TEAMS members, internal ILMB GIS staff or a pre-qualified GIS contractor.

Oil and Gas Commission (OGC) act as a liaison between the industry operators and the provincial emergency management structure to provide just in time information related to threatened oil and gas assets; may designate a representative to attend the PREOC or may establish a government EOC at the OGC office.

Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (MAL) provide advice to farmers, on the protection of crops, livestock and coordinate the emergency evacuation and care of poultry and livestock.

Ministry of Environment (MOE) provide professional and technical advice and direction on handling hazardous material spills or pollution spills; ensure the proper disposal of hazardous wastes and pollutants; assess and monitor [air quality](#). Parks Branch liaises with MFR and the PREOC when wildfires impact parks and evacuations are necessary.

Ministry of Health (MOH) provide and coordinate ambulance services and triage, treatment, transportation and care of casualties; provide the continuity of care for persons evacuated from hospitals or other health institutions and for medically dependant persons from other care facilities; provide critical incident stress debriefing and counselling services; provide

support and supervision services for physically challenged or medically disabled persons affected by an emergency.

Regional Health Authorities may provide awareness and information on health risks associated with air and water quality, food safety during power outages, and advice to help evacuees manage stress. Implement evacuation of health care facilities within the health authority jurisdiction.

Public Affairs Bureau (PAB) establish a provincial communications strategy based on collaboration with provincial response agencies to ensure consistent messaging and provision of adequate timely public information as illustrated in the *BC Public Information Plan*; upon request, PAB provides Information Officers to support the PECC, PREOCs, and EOCs.

Federal

Public Safety Canada (PS) upon request from the province, provide coordination of federal integrated response efforts such as:

- **Department of National Defence (DND), Canadian Forces** personnel and other resources
- **Indian Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)** assistance to First Nations communities
- provision of subject matter expertise from **Environment Canada**
- **Industry Canada** to provide situational awareness and mitigation of critical telecommunications infrastructure

Private Sector/Crown Corporations

- **Utilities** provide agency representatives through the emergency management structure to act as liaison for sharing information relating to threatened or disrupted power, telephone and gas services and infrastructure; facilitate the coordination of critical service restoration by priority.
- **Rail Companies** provide agency representation to act as liaison through the emergency management structure and share information related to rail operations threatened or impacted by wildland fires.

Appendix A

Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

BCERMS	British Columbia Emergency Response Management System
CIFFC	Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre
DWPP	Community Wildfire Protection Plan
EMBC	Emergency Management British Columbia
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
FNESS	First Nations Emergency Services Society
ICS	Incident Command System
IEPC	Inter-Agency Emergency Preparedness Council
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
MAL	Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
M-DEC	Ministers-Deputies Emergency Committee
MFR	Ministry of Forests and Range
MOE	Ministry of Environment
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOT	Ministry of Transportation
OFC	Office of the Fire Commissioner
OGC	Oil and Gas Commission
FCIO	Fire Centre Information Officers
PEP	Provincial Emergency Program
PFIO	Provincial Fire Information Officers
PREOC	Provincial Emergency Operations Centre
PCG	Provincial Command Group (Protection Branch, Ministry of Forests and Range)
PS	Public Safety Canada
PSSG	Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
SUP	Structural Protection Unit
TEAMS	Temporary Emergency Assignment Management System
U/C	Unified Command
UBCM	Union of British Columbia Municipalities
WUI	Wildland Urban Interface

emergency means a present or imminent event or circumstance that (a) is caused by accident, fire, explosion, technical failure or the forces of nature, and (b) requires prompt coordination of action or special regulation of persons or property to protect the health, safety or welfare of a person or to limit damage to property

disaster means a calamity that (a) is caused by accident, fire, explosion or technical failure or by the forces of nature, and (b) has resulted in serious harm to the health, safety or welfare of people, or in widespread damage to property

Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) located at the Provincial Emergency Program's headquarters, ensures 24/7 response, as required, to all hazards throughout BC and manages receipt and dissemination of emergency information between response agencies, industry, all levels of government, private sector and the public. The ECC is responsible for issuance of PEP approved task numbers and recording incident and event information in the ECC Operational Logging System

Fire Service Advisors (FSA) are regional representatives of the Fire Commissioner

FireSmart – an initiative to promote wildfire prevention methods among home owners and communities

hazard, risk and vulnerability analysis – a tool to help communities make risk-based choices to address vulnerabilities, mitigate hazards and prepare for response to and recovery from hazard events

local authority means (a) for a municipality, the municipal council, (b) for an electoral area in a regional district, the board of the regional district

mutual aid means the sharing of resources between response agencies under a pre-arranged agreement

reception centres are sites where evacuees may be received during an emergency

emergency management pillars are the four phases of managing emergencies that include mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery

emergency social services (ESS) is the provision of short-term assistance to British Columbians who are forced to leave their homes because of an emergency. ESS assistance includes food, lodging, clothing, emotional support and family reunification

mountain pine beetle infest and eventually kill mature lodgepole pine which comprises the majority of BC's interior forests. The beetle thrives under warm weather conditions and as BC has experienced several consecutive mild winters and drought-like summers, beetle populations have increased to epidemic levels. The cumulative area of provincial Crown forest affected was about 13.5 million hectares as of 2007

search and rescue (SAR) trained volunteers who may respond at the request of local authorities during wildland urban interface fires to help plan for and implement evacuations

task number a number assigned to incidents/events to track financial expenditures

Appendix B

References

BCERMS Overview

http://www.pep.gov.bc.ca/bcerms/bcerms_overview-manual.pdf

British Columbia Provincial Firestorm 2003 Review

<http://bcwildfire.ca/History/ReportsAndReviews/2003/FirestormReport.pdf>

Community Planning Tool Kit

<http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/firecom/pdf/homeowner-firesmart.pdf>

Community Recovery Tool Kit

<http://www.pep.gov.bc.ca/Community/recoverytk.html>

Community Response Tool Kit

<http://www.pep.gov.bc.ca/Community/responsetk.html>

Community Wildfire Protection Plan Program

<http://ground.hpr.for.gov.bc.ca/cwpp2006program.htm>

Emergency Operations Centre Guidelines

http://www.pep.gov.bc.ca/training/EOC_Level_2_Nov06.pdf

Emergency Social Services

<http://www.ess.bc.ca/links.htm>

Financial Assistance Guide for Emergency Response and Recovery Costs

http://www.pep.gov.bc.ca/dfa_claims/Financial_Assistance_Guide.pdf

Fire Centre Regional Boundaries

http://bcwildfire.ca/images/BC_firecentres_colour.gif

FireSmart Manual

<http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/firecom/pdf/homeowner-firesmart.pdf>

Mountain Pine Beetle - Ministry of Forests and Range

http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/mountain_pine_beetle/

Ministry of Transportation, DriveBC

<http://www.drivebc.ca/>

Office of the Fire Commissioner
<http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/firecom/index.htm>

PEP Regional Boundaries
http://www.pep.gov.bc.ca/about_pep/regions_2004.html

Protection Branch, Ministry of Forests and Range
<http://www.bcwildfire.ca/>

Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centre Guidelines
http://www.pep.gov.bc.ca/bcerms/bcerms_preoc-manual.pdf

Temporary Emergency Assignment Management System (T.E.A.M.S.)
<http://www.pep.gov.bc.ca/TEAMS/teams.html>

Appendix C

Legislation

BC Wildfire Act

<http://bcwildfire.ca/LegReg/>

BC Wildfire Regulation

<http://bcwildfire.ca/LegReg/>

BC Fire Services Act

http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96144_01

Emergency Program Act

http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96111_01

Emergency Program Management Regulation

http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/11_477_94

Local Authority Emergency Management Regulation

http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/12_380_95

Compensation and Disaster Financial Assistance Regulation

http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/10_124_95

Appendix D

Interface Fire Communications Action Plan

All Hazards Integrated Response

Communications Action Plan

INTERFACE FIRE

Background

Local governments and regional districts are required to have an all-hazards emergency plan in place for their jurisdiction. This includes the ability to activate an emergency operations centre and issue evacuation orders under a declared State of Local Emergency within an all-hazards context (interface fires, floods, hazardous material spills etc.)

When there is a potential threat to communities from wildland fires in various areas throughout British Columbia, the Ministry of Forests and Range, Protection Program, through its six Fire Centres, is tasked with wildland fire management and suppression.

Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Environment, along with federal departments, may provide information on road closures, air quality and smoke and health information and other public safety information for coordinated dissemination.

The provincial emergency management structure is activated to support local government. Local government authorities may request added support, in the way of provincial public information officers and/or emergency management staff in their emergency operations centres, acting on their behalf.

Communications Objectives

When the PREOC/PECC is activated to a higher level to support a community EOC in response to interface fire threats, deployed provincial TEAMS information officers (IOs) will work in a coordinated manner with spokespeople and information officers in the lead ministry, other involved agencies and various levels of government to support their counterparts at the local authority level.

Information officers report to the information chief (or manager) of the unit, who is responsible to the PREOC Director. The section provides information to the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) public information section.

Using BCERMS principles, they will coordinate with information officers in local government Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) and with other activated information officers (MOE, MOH, ESS, MOFR Protection, OFC, RCMP, federal government, military, crown corps etc.) and along with other groups (Red Cross, Search and Rescue, First Nations Emergency Services Society etc) and report to the PECC.

Using the *British Columbia Crisis Communications Strategy for Major Provincial Emergencies*, deployed TEAMS information officers will ensure appropriate spokespeople are available to:

- Inform public, media, local governments and stakeholders about the British Columbia Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS) and the integrated response model.
- Inform the public, media, local governments and stakeholders as to what measures the Province has in place to assist communities.
- Support the quick dissemination of key public safety information to affected individuals and the media at the appropriate response level.
- Inform the public, media, local governments and stakeholders of the role Emergency Social Services has in case of an evacuation--where the ESS reception centre is located and what services are available to the public.
- In larger scale evacuations, inform the public when the 1-800 line for the Central Registration and Inquiry Bureau (CRIB) will provide family reunification services (usually Red Cross volunteers with support of the Province)
- Inform the media of emergency management structure and operational protocols in emergency situations.

Media Needs In The Event Of A Major Emergency

Outlined below are some of the requirements media outlets would have in the event of a major emergency in British Columbia. The list is designed to help TV, radio and print outlets work more closely with government and other agencies in dealing with situations, such as an earthquake, tsunami or chemical spill, where public safety would be at risk.

- Initial alert of situation via email, phone or fax to newsroom.
- Regular information updates.
- Media spokespeople who are available for comment either by phone, email or in person during regular and off hours.
- Visuals – either through media cameras or supplied footage, pics or graphics.
- Face-to-face availabilities with media reps in major centres and at scene of event.
- Suggestions of secondary spokespeople and experts.
- Access to those affected – *outside* of reception centres etc. – if they are willing to talk.
- Access to those working in the field with first-hand experiences to relate.
- Websites, telephone numbers etc. that public can access for more information.

Communications Strategies and Tactics

- Coordinate all PREOC communications with local government EOCs and other ministries and provincial and federal agencies (usually through daily conference calls or a Joint Information Centre.)
- Provide overview information (evacuation information, maps and photos) from site or local EOCs to PECC (for bulletins, web site updates etc.)
- Provide media, public and stakeholders with regular updates/overview on regional situation through appropriate spokesperson(s).
- Identify and develop recommendations/messaging for addressing emerging issues.
- Develop key messaging, brief spokespeople and support need for media availabilities and public meeting as required by local authorities.

- Support establishment of a media relations centre at ESS reception centres by the local team (as required.)
- Attend site or command post as directed to enhance flow of information through EOCs to PREOCs (only as directed.)
- Request activation of call centres for public information, as necessary. Provide messaging to call centres.
- Arrange media, news conference and VIP tours as directed.

Key Messages about Operations

Local governments and regional districts are required to have an all-hazards emergency plan in place for their jurisdictions. Public safety is always the highest priority.

When there is a potential threat to a community from interface fire, the Province, along with federal authorities, will monitor the situation and support local authorities in assessing the risk to the public and to local industry. Potential threats to government infrastructure, the environment, or to the provincial economy are also monitored.

The British Columbia Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS) is used when the provincial emergency management structure is activated. This occurs when a BC community or any significant infrastructure is threatened by an emergency or disaster which may overwhelm a local authorities' ability to respond.

Whenever a local authority activates an emergency operations centre (EOC), a Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centre (PREOC) and the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) will also be activated.

Provincial support *may* include providing resources for the care of evacuees, providing emergency management expertise, technical advice, public information management, equipment and supplies and the transportation of materials as requested by local authorities.

Public Safety Issues

If there is concern for public safety, first responders, local emergency officials or elected officials (through the local EOC) will provide information and instruction to the public through their local media, news conferences, web sites, information centres, public meetings and other resources available to them.

Provincial TEAMS IOs may be asked to provide support to local government EOCs with this function (either within their emergency structure, or in their PREOC IO role) to ensure information is disseminated quickly to affected individuals and the media.

In an *escalating situation* (in complex emergencies involving multiple groups and agencies) and when the provincial emergency management structure is activated, the key provincial spokespeople also provide *overview* information on the regional or provincial situation and emergency operations largely via news bulletins, web site, media interviews etc.

Process of Notification for Evacuation Alerts, Orders, Rescinds

- In an escalating emergency situation, generally decisions about evacuations are made at the local community or incident level.
- In the normal course of events, local governments and regional districts will activate a local emergency operations centre, declare a local state of emergency, and issue an evacuation alert or order based on degree of risk to the public.
- RCMP and municipal police carry out evacuation orders, often with the support of Search and Rescue or other volunteers.

Other types of evacuations.

Ministry of Forests, in the case of a seriously threatening interface fire, may issue a tactical evacuation to get people out of an area quickly, as they bring resources in to fight the fire. Also, sometimes people will voluntarily evacuate because they perceive a threat, such as when they see smoke from the fire.

Reception centres for people evacuated from their homes

Local Emergency Social Services volunteers are activated in these situations, as part of the support provided by the community, and through a program funded by the province. They set up reception centres for evacuees to provide for basic needs (lodging, food, clothing) for evacuees on a short term basis (generally 72 hrs, but this may be extended.)

The evacuation process has **three key stages**. *This approach is consistent for all types of emergencies throughout the province.*

Evacuation Alert: A warning is issued about an imminent threat to life and property, and people are asked to be ready to leave on short notice. When people choose to leave an area before or during the issue of an alert, this is referred to as a voluntary evacuation.

Evacuation Order: When an evacuation order is issued, people must leave the area immediately due to serious public safety concerns. RCMP or municipal police carry out evacuations.

Evacuation Rescind: An evacuation order or alert is rescinded when an area is determined to be safe. People under order may return. An evacuation order may be reinstated if the threat returns.

There are a number of pieces of provincial legislation, as well as the Emergency Program Act, which authorize various types of evacuations for specific hazards if necessary. The Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) may issue an evacuation order to the public under section 25 of the Fire Services Act in a quickly emerging situation as a *transitional tool* that can be replaced by a local government evacuation order issued under a declaration of a State of Local Emergency. Powers under section 25 of the Fires Services Act may be used in areas of provincial or federal properties and First Nations lands.

PEP Web site www.pep.bc.ca will include or link to information on

- **Fire Safety and Information**
- **Road Conditions/Closures**
- **Fire Information Update**
- **Local Government Evacuation Status and Resources**
- **Current Weather Conditions**
- **Health Alerts**

Support through Recovery

As communities move into the recovery phase, the Province may again be asked by the local authority to provide support. Provincial recovery support is facilitated through centralized coordination of numerous stakeholders involved in the provision of recovery services such as The Salvation Army, Red Cross and Mennonite Disaster Services and other resources. This ensures communities are best served, and that there are no gaps or duplication in efforts in the recovery process.