



AFTER ACTION REPORT: Flood Falls Wildfire

PMO.HSE.REP-22-123

Fraser Valley Regional District

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DOCUMENT CONTROL

Rev	Date	Rev Status	Originator	Reviewer	Approver
0.1	Jan 31, 2023	Draft	Dean Monterey PMO	Paul Harris PMO	n/a
0.2	Feb 1, 2023	Draft	Dean Monterey PMO	Tarina Colledge FVRD	n/a
1.0	Feb 3, 2023	Final	Dean Monterey PMO	Paul Harris PMO	Tarina Colledge FVRD

INCIDENT DESCRIPTION

Type:	Wildland Urban Interface Fire
Incident Location:	Laidlaw B.C.
Facility Locations:	ICP: Laidlaw EOC/ECC's: Hope, FVRD,
Incident Dates:	Sept 8-15, 2022
AAR meeting date	Dec 1, 2022
Prepared by:	Dean Monterey, Senior Emergency Management Advisor dmonterey@pmogs.com
Supported by:	Tarina Colledge, Manager of Emergency Management, FVRD emergencyinfo@fvrd.ca

RELATED DOCUMENTS

FVRD Emergency Response Plan, District of Hope Emergency Response Plan, BCWS Standard Operating Guidelines, EMBC Policies and Procedures

1 INTRODUCTION

PMO Global Services (PMO) was engaged by the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) to conduct an After Action Report (AAR) for the Flood Falls Wildfire response. This report documents results of the facilitated incident review meeting at the Hope Recreation Centre on December 1, 2022, from 0850 to 1200 PST. A Questionnaire was distributed prior to the facilitated review, and the results are incorporated within this report.

The facilitated incident review meeting is a structured process by the participants and those responsible for the incident for analyzing what happened, what was done well, and how it can be improved upon. The results have been compiled into this After Action Report. AAR use has extended to business as a knowledge management tool and a way to build a culture of accountability.

After the Flood Falls Wildfire, the FVRD obtained funding through an Expense Authorization Form approved by Emergency Management BC (EMBC) to engage a consultant to conduct the facilitated review meeting and prepare this AAR to help identify what was done well and what can be improved upon. The consolidated understandings are presented within this report. The AAR may inform emergency management planning and performance improvements for FVRD and participating parties.

2 KEY RESULTS

Positives:

- ✓ Effective communication between FVRD and Hope Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs)
- ✓ Effective FVRD communication
- ✓ Collaboration between FVRD and supporting Evacuee/Emergency Support Services (ESS) officials from other municipalities
- ✓ Resources that were needed were available
- ✓ Preexisting agreement with BC Wildfire Service
- ✓ Identifying gaps and improvements needed

Improvement Opportunities:

- ▲ All parties can work to improve understanding of BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) roles & responsibilities and improve communications with BCWS
- ▲ All parties can work to better understand First Nation Emergency Management and improve communications with First Nations during emergencies (both leadership and staff)
- ▲ Need to review and revise the FVRD BCWS contract for increased clarity
- ▲ Improve understanding of the roles of FVRD, District of Hope (DOH), and the roles of BCWS and EMBC regarding the Hope Airpark. This critical infrastructure is owned and operated by FVRD, is located in the DOH's jurisdiction, and is called upon by provincial resources. The BCWS has a use arrangement for specific use, however, this agreement is often enacted with engagement of EMBC or DOH as an afterthought.
- ▲ Continue holding pre-fire season meetings with all participants to ensure lessons observed herein are turned into lessons learned prior to the next wildfire. Include representation from

DOH and EMBC, MOTI, and consider inclusion of Transport Canada for air traffic regulatory considerations.

3 PROCESS

The process consisted of:

- A desktop review of all pertinent documentation as collected by and provided by FVRD. Much of this was electronic in nature. Participants were also asked to provide any paper documentation they wished to share.
- A questionnaire was distributed to participants and received 6 respondents. See Appendix B.
- A facilitated workshop: participants divided into two groups and asked three basic questions. This report summarizes their comments. This workshop required three hours to complete.

4 AFTER ACTION REVIEW SCOPE

This AAR covers the primary activities of the FVRD, District of Hope, First Nations and the BCWS. It does not address RCMP, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, or Emergency Management BC.

**At the time of the incident, provincial emergency management rested within the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General as Emergency Management BC (EMBC). In early 2023, the Province of BC moved provincial responsibilities for Emergency Management under a new standalone Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR). This report will refer to Emergency Management BC (EMBC) due to the accuracy at the time of the event.*

5 INCIDENT SCENARIO

BC Wildfire Service and Hope District Fire Department responded to the Flood Falls Wildfire (V12335) located to the southwest of Hope. This fire was reported to BC Wildfire Service in the late evening on September 8, 2022.

This wildfire burned in very steep terrain that presented access challenges for ground crews. Crews worked along the Highway 1 corridor, Hunter Creek Forest Service Road, and other key sections of the fire as required. Helicopters focused on bucketing the east and west flanks of this fire.

FVRD activated an Emergency Operations Centre on September 9, 2022, based on the recommendation of the BC Wildfire Service through EMBC and jointly issued an evacuation alert with the District of Hope. Subsequently, the evacuation alert was expanded to include 86 properties and 10 properties were put under an evacuation order within the FVRD Electoral Area B (Electoral Area B - Laidlaw Area). FVRD and the District of Hope jointly rescinded the evacuation alerts and orders on September 13, 2022.

6 AAR COMMENTS

The following is a compilation of participants' written and verbal comments with minor edits for context clarity. It was observed that some participants had opposite perspectives on whether something was a positive or an area of improvement. This can be seen through the sub-sections below. Tally marks are indicated next to comments that were seen as repeat themes from multiple sources.

6.1 POSITIVES – WHAT WENT WELL

- ✓ Regular Structured EOC Meetings & briefings & in-person briefings x III
- ✓ Regular communications (email) from EOC Director
- ✓ Having prior experience in this EOC role, despite no experience related to wildfire events.
- ✓ Supportive and collaborate team (some familiar/new faces)
- ✓ Advance notice from FVRD of alerts and orders permitted local coordination.
- ✓ Excellent comms with FVRD EOC x III
- ✓ Effective local volunteer mobilization
 - The good level of collaboration between FVRD EOC and ESS officials from other municipalities that lent support to evacuees. X II
 - Leveraging public information channels locally (e.g., FVRD website, Facebook, etc.).
 - Communication with Laidlaw Ratepayers community preparedness leads.
- ✓ Cooperation between FVRD and District of Hope for joint alerts/orders, delivering alerts/orders and cancellations, issuing notifications via Alertable, etc. x III
- ✓ Connection with Stó:lō Emergency Planning Secretariat staff
- ✓ Willingness of contracted Airpark operator to assist with response needs beyond contract role
- ✓ Staff on the ground at the airpark
- ✓ Preexisting agreement with BCWS
- ✓ BCWS specific:
 - Resources that were needed were available
 - Communication with local FN leaders was continuous
 - Evacuation alert/orders were smooth
 - Internal communications to Section Chiefs and EOCD for approving situation reports, action plans, etc.
 - Dissemination of info from BCWS to EOCD to Planning
- ✓ Chawathil FN specific:
 - Obtained 36 air purifiers (helped elders with health issues impacted by smoke)
 - This meeting! Identifying gaps and improvement opportunities
 - Learning that community leadership were in communication with BCWS is helpful to understand for future events

6.2 IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- EOC wildfire experience was new. I was unfamiliar with the differences to other disaster types.
- Not understanding how EOC operations differ during a BCWS-led event, with the added complication of FVRD's airpark being used as a BCWS home base
 - Lots of time was spent developing EAFs related to the site of BCWS operations that were denied as the requests needed to be sent by BCWS, not FVRD
- Rescinding of Evacuation Orders/Alerts is often late in the day, adds stress and pressure on communications staff. Once finalized orders/alerts are completed, there is still lots of work that needs to be done by the EOC Information Officer and FVRD communications staff – updating the website, social media channels, and Alertable. This takes time, and often leads to extra stress if the order/alert was received earlier in the regular workday or actions are taken to announce rescinds are in process.
- Poor comms with BCWS x II. This was raised at a lower level, possibly as a result of not co-locating at the ICP.
- Not clear who at BCWS did what
- Access permission to areas under order was needed for affected area for residents and volunteers
- Some residents had trouble accessing ESS resources, confusion regarding eligibility and authority for ESS provisions
- Establishing initial BC Wildfire point-of-contact for information gathering and decision support
- Confusion regarding roles, responsibilities, and authorities for emergency management within First Nations. EMBC should deepen their role supporting First Nations communities in navigating these complexities. Local Governments are perceived to have a greater role than they do. There was a misunderstanding that the District of Hope should have taken on more responsibility in this area. x IIII
- The BCWS FVRD Airpark contract did not include some BCWS needs
- Turnaround time to produce evacuation notices was too long - we had templates that were not specific to wildfires. Accuracy of information regarding evacuation alerts and orders. X III
- Coordinating with FVRD EOC/Hope EOC in sending joint notices: response times, technical difficulties with file formats in documentation x II
- Hard to advance plan when wildfire situations change suddenly
- Using more local knowledge. (Laidlaw)
- Liaison process and contacts were a gap in the absence of the EPC
- Jurisdictional understanding
- Traffic improvements and considerations for access to areas NOT under order. Protection of First Nation communities when MOTI traffic detours drivers toward First Nation communities. Increased traffic in rural areas with singular access/egress limits accessibility of critical health services and access to those life sustaining services (diabetes, chemo, etc.)
- Formal connections to Laidlaw residents can continue to be strengthened
- Community in Hope and FVRD communication
- Keeping MOTI at the table during evacuations
- Knowing and being aware of wildfire hazards and response. Recommendations from BCWS to local authorities and First Nations focus on hazards relevant to flames. Recommendations in the future could reflect upon smoke and ember travel as hazards, and access/egress for

critical medical services. These recommendations may also consider whether First Nations communities have or do not have local fire protection services and capacity.

6.3 Participant Recommendations

- ▲ Prioritizing rapid and early communications to the public to allow residents to plan and prepare. Documents can be pushed once ready. Giving a heads up faster allows people to leave an area perceived to be dangerous. x III
- ▲ Templates for EOCs that include wildfire pre-amble and instructions for those evacuating or returning
- ▲ Follow-up with effected local residents for access permissions and confirmation of ESS registration and support
- ▲ Facilitate better comms with BCWS
- ▲ FVRD to initiate contact with Ratepayers EOC
- ▲ BCWS should do more to reach out and establish direct lines of communication as early as possible, whether through EMBC or the local authority/First Nation. Should the fire have spread quickly, situational awareness would have been drastically challenged and therefore would have lacked information to best support quick action.
- ▲ The Federal and Provincial Governments need to support First Nations regarding their powers, authorities, resources, and support mechanisms, their roles, available to their communities during emergencies and disasters. Role clarity and access to resources dedicated only to them for emergency management are necessary and cannot be provided by local authorities in most cases.
- ▲ FVRD BCWS contract review and revisions for clarity
- ▲ Develop a critical infrastructure Emergency Response plan for the Airpark.
- ▲ Understanding FVRD role vs. DOH role as the Airpark is within the DOH, run by the FVRD and the event serviced beyond the DOH. Once the event was done by FVRD, the Airpark operations continued.
- ▲ There was confusion from EMBC and BCWS about expenses at the Airpark and who should be paying for them even though there was an EMBC task number. This needs to be sorted at the provincial level.

PMO Comments

- Participants were well engaged and demonstrated a genuine desire to address areas of improvement.
- Relationships among contributing partnerships deepened and improved. All parties brought a committed intent to listen, learn, contribute and understand.

PMO Recommendations

- ▲ Build depth in the EOC Liaison role and familiarity among EOC team members on EMBC's policies, procedures, forms, and templates.
- ▲ Build depth in the Information Officer role focusing on the roles and tasks of an IO. The IO may be supported by corporate communications staff, however, the role of the IO is not focused on corporate standard communications.
- ▲ FVRD should continue holding a pre-fire season meeting of all participants, review this Incident, and ensure lessons observed in the Flood Falls fire are turned into lessons learned.

Consider a regional specific meeting that focuses on incidents using the Hope Airpark and cross-jurisdictional incidents.

- ▲ PMO agrees with the participant recommendations identified above.

7 APPENDICES

A. Attendance Record

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agencies</i>
Deanna John	Chawathil
Tarina Colledge	FVRD
Peyton Bradley	FVRD
Graham Daneluz	FVRD
Hasib Nadvi	FVRD
Kelly Pater	Abbotsford Emergency Program
George Campbell	BCWS
Brian Davis	BCWS
Brad Warnock	BCWS
John Fortoloczky	HOPE CAO & EOCD
Hans Mulder	Laidlaw Ratepayers Association
Dianne Garner	Sto:lo EPS
Dean Monterey	PMO Global Services

B. Survey Submissions

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agencies</i>
Amy Hseih	FVRD
Christina Vugteveen	FVRD
John John Fortoloczky	HOPE CAO & EOCD
Hans Mulder	Laidlaw Ratepayers Association
Jaime Van Nes	FVRD
Teresa Alexander	FVRD

C. Survey Submissions



An After Action Review (AAR) is a structured review process for analyzing what happened, why it happened, and how it can be done better, by the participants and those responsible for the incident or event. Their use has extended to business as a knowledge management tool and a way to build a culture of accountability.

To assist you in your participation in the AAR, please take some time to answer the following questions:

1. What was your role?
2. Where were you located?
3. List 3 items that worked well for you.
4. List 3 items that didn't work well for you:
5. Recommendations you feel strongly about; use over if needed: