

# PREPAREDNESS, RESILIENCY & EMERGENCY PROGRAM (PREP) FRAMEWORK

*Peoples survivability and capacity to withstand disaster are enhanced as reliance on external support is reduced.*

CONCEPT DRAFT

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & GRATITUDE

The Fraser Valley Regional District expresses our gratitude to the plethora of peers, colleagues, researchers, and institutes for the depth of research and publications regarding rural emergency preparedness, resiliency, response, and recovery.

This volume of work was inspired by the foundation of the original Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program (NEPP) origin, which was co-developed by the Justice Institute of BC with the Greater Vancouver Regional Emergency Planning Committee (1995) with insights from the Rural Disaster Resiliency Planning project, coordinated and published by the Justice Institute of BC and published in 2012.

Throughout the drafting of this work, many models of community-based resiliency were researched, including the Emergency Hub program from the Wellington Region in New Zealand, and the Neighbourhood Empowerment Network model from San Francisco, California. The uniqueness of Regional Districts, as a governance model, the overlapping authorities, the rural patchwork of response services, and the reduced likelihood of government owned infrastructure, and privately owned local amenities deepens the need to establish of a framework enabling neighbourhood-based tailoring to local contexts.

Although many laws and processes have evolved in BC since the above-mentioned programs were created, global disaster research continues to demonstrate the most successful outcomes occur when communities prepare together, understand how to help one another, understand real versus perceived risks, and have a framework to self-organize without increasing safety risks among one another.

This program is built for and dedicated to those throughout the many unincorporated communities of the FVRD working to establish a sense of community in rural and remote areas, with high risks, development surrounded by vast unmitigated Crown public lands, limited and often singular paved escape routes, finite resources, aging populations, delayed response times, and less government owned infrastructure than what is common in municipalities. This program is designed to help community groups continue self-organizing, safely, to increase the effectiveness of neighbours helping neighbours.

The FVRD welcomes other Regional Districts to consider our approach and welcomes commentary and upcycling of our approach. Resiliency takes all of society.

*Resiliency turns disaster into opportunity, and uncertainty into community.*

## 1. PURPOSE

The Preparedness, Resiliency & Emergency Program (PREP) is a community-driven initiative operating within the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) Emergency Management Program. Its purpose is to empower rural and unincorporated communities to prepare for, withstand, and recover from emergencies.

Through local collaboration, social networks and trust-based relationships, PREP actively supports household preparedness, fosters the growth of independent capacity within community organizations, and inspires strong neighbourhood connections.

The program aligns with provincial legislation and the all-of-society approach to emergency management mandated by British Columbia's Emergency and Disaster Management Act (2023). This approach recognizes that no single agency or government can respond to every impact alone. PREP promotes awareness of local hazards, addresses the limitations of traditional emergency services in rural areas, and emphasizes readiness and risk reduction before disaster strikes.

PREP was specifically developed to address the unique challenges and leverage the strengths of over 30 unincorporated and rural communities across the region — places where external help may take days to arrive during a large-scale disaster. It complements, rather than replaces, official response mechanisms, preparing communities to be more self-reliant and connected before an emergency occurs.

Resilience is defined in the Canadian Emergency Management Framework as “the capacity of a system, community, or society to adapt to disturbances resulting from hazards by persevering, recuperating, or changing to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning.

In essence, resiliency is how well a community can be impacted and still stand together.

### Vision

Tenaciously resilient unincorporated communities  
Represented with the hashtag #TenaciouslyPREPared

### Mission

Inspiring personal and neighbourhood resiliency through hazard awareness, mitigation and preparedness activities.  
Summarized with the motto: **Anticipate. Mitigate. Prepare.**

## 2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Disasters are unpredictable and sometimes all best-case planning may be challenged leaving ambiguity and local discretion to guide PREP Pod member actions.

In the absence of formal direction during a disaster, PREP Pods and community members follow these three principles, while not foraying into the responsibilities of others:

**Safe** - Take actions that do not put yourself or others in unnecessary danger.

**Organized** - Work within a planned approach, with defined roles and agreed-upon methods.

**Coordinated** - Share information and work together to maximize resources.

These principles help ensure PREP Pods act effectively, even in uncertain conditions. Guiding principles also add clarity that helps prevent PREP Pods from taking action for matters that are the responsibility of police, firefighters, wildland firefighters, search and rescue, emergency medics, or lead ministries, etc.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

Resilience	The capacity of a system, community, or society to adapt to disturbances resulting from hazards by persevering, recuperating, or changing to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning.
Disaster	A serious disruption caused by hazardous events interacting with vulnerabilities, leading to losses that exceed a community's ability to cope without external assistance.
Emergency	A state caused by events or incidents that lead to serious harm or damage, requiring a coordinated response. Incidents can sometimes escalate to become emergencies or disasters. Multiple incidents in multiple locations may also rise to be treated like an emergency.
Incident	A single occurrence of a specific hazard in one geographic location. Handled by an Incident response organization or authority within their routine resources and/or mutual aid agreements.
State of Local Emergency (SOLE)	A temporary measure under BC law granting local authorities specific emergency powers for up to 14 days.
PREP Pods	Local groups led by trained Leads, coordinating neighbourhood preparedness and acting as liaisons with FVRD Emergency Management.
Emergency Sites	Facilities or locations pre-identified for emergency use, such as alternate EOCs, evacuee support sites, or supply distribution points.
Hazard	A potential source of harm.
Risk	The likelihood of a hazard causing a certain level of impact.
Vulnerability	Conditions that increase susceptibility to hazard impacts.

### 4. LEGISLATIVE & POLICY CONTEXT

#### LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND MANDATES

##### International and Federal Influences

- » *United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)*: a voluntary international agreement that serves as a global blueprint for significantly reducing disaster risk and losses. Adopted by UN member states in 2015, the framework emphasizes a "whole-of-society" approach and aims to prevent new risks while reducing existing ones through a set of key priorities and targets.
- » *Federal Emergency Management Framework for Canada, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* ): A guiding document developed by federal, provincial, and territorial (FPT) governments to strengthen how they work together to protect Canadians from a wide range of natural and human-induced hazards. It operates on an all-hazards, whole-of-society approach, recognizing that emergency management is a shared responsibility among all levels of government, Indigenous communities, individuals, and the private sector.

##### Provincial Influences

- » *Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA) (2023)*: This is the primary provincial legislation that provides the overarching legislative framework mandating an "all-of-society approach" to

emergency management. The EDMA takes a risk informed approach to disaster and emergency management planning throughout all four phases of the emergency management cycle: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery; and positions local governments, including the FVRD, to take a leadership role in inspiring community preparedness and resiliency. The EDMA is supported by a suite of regulations that outline responsibilities for lead ministries, local authorities, critical infrastructure owners, and disaster financial assistance.

- » *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)*: A BC law that establishes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as the provincial framework for reconciliation. Passed unanimously in November 2019, it was the first legislation of its kind in Canada.
- » *Local Government Act & Community Charter*: BC's primary pieces of legislation that grant powers and define the structure for its municipalities and regional districts. The two acts function as a cohesive legislative framework, with the Community Charter empowering municipalities and the Local Government Act providing the framework for regional districts, while also containing provisions that apply to both.

### Local Influences

- » *FVRD Bylaws*: The FVRD's emergency management framework is also founded on its own bylaws:
  - *FVRD Emergency Management Regulations Bylaw No. 1622, 2021*: This bylaw establishes the FVRD's Emergency Management Organization (EMO) and sets out its structure, roles, and responsibilities. The EMO is empowered by statutory authority and supported by this bylaw to make decisions independent of the Board during emergencies.
  - *FVRD Emergency Management Program Service Area Merger Bylaw No. 1606, 2020*: merges a series of historic bylaws with different levels of service from the pre-amalgamation period when FVRD was three separate and distinct regional districts. The merger bylaw establishes a single level of service across all 8 electoral areas of the FVRD.
- » *FVRD Emergency Management Program Policy*: serves as a "foundation stone" for the FVRD Emergency Management Program, outlining the expected level of service and ensuring that essential program elements meet statutory requirements. It supports the development and implementation of the PREP Strategy.
- » *Hazard Report*: summarizes potential natural hazards across the FVRD's 8 electoral areas, highlighting potential consequences, exposed assets, and climate change impacts. The hazard pairs with the Geohazard map layer on our web map.
- » *Emergency Management Plan*: a comprehensive strategy that coordinates efforts throughout the organization and assembles the linkage between those services and emergency management (as a program).

When paired together, the information in both the Hazard Report and Emergency Management Plan bring a holistic picture of the hazards that exist in general areas, and a snapshot of each community with enough demography for Census Canada to have created a local 'designated place' profile. A reader can pair the electoral area hazard summary from the hazard report, with their community profile from the emergency management plan, and where there is additional information for evacuation route guides connect the information within to see the realistic nature of their community, its risks, access and egress limitations, and potential resources on the landscape. This comprehensive picture is then used to inform local PREP actions to understand risks and plan for resilience.

## 5. STRATEGIC GOALS

The strategic goals of PREP are aimed at increasing readiness, growing risk awareness, and having people in communities able to facilitate PREP activities among their neighbourhood networks. More PREP groups does not result in more effective coordination or more readiness. FVRD's strategic goals may be unique from the PREP Pods goals.

<b>FVRD Goals</b>	<b>PREP Pod Goals</b>
Maintain framework	Onboard a Lead and a Pod
Onboard PREP Pods and Leads	Locally engage among members/neighbours
Create and coordinate network of PREP Pods	Perform community resiliency actions

More broadly, actionable strategic goals include:

- » Increasing household preparedness – every rural household has information to help them achieve their own 14+ day emergency plan.
- » Grow Pod coverage – establishment of PREP Pods in unincorporated & gated communities.
- » Strengthen leadership – train and support PREP Leads to coordinate local readiness.
- » Enhance hazard awareness – building awareness of real vs. perceived hazards with tools that already exist such as the FVRD Hazard Report and Geohazard Map. Communities may wish to undertake a local *Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Assessment* and share this with the FVRD for reflection in their Emergency Management Resiliency vulnerability/resiliency score.
- » Learn about official response – who does what, and how not to put yourself in harms way.

## 6. PROGRAM STRUCTURE

### **FVRD'S ROLE**

The FVRD Emergency Management Program oversees the PREP framework, facilitating its integration within the broader emergency management continuum.

PREP provides foundational knowledge of emergency management in British Columbia, and the FVRD Emergency Management Department manages the framework, onboarding process, capacity building, and relevant hazard and vulnerability assessment tools.

FVRD's Finance department staff manage the Grant in Aid program and engage relevant FVRD departments in the review of application for subject-area review to ensure activities and assets funded by GIA is not overlapping with other service providers, or contradictory to the intent of any bylaw, policy, procedure or program.

FVRD's electoral area services committee (EASC), a committee of Electoral Area elected Directors is presented with eligible GIA applications for endorsement before advancement to the Board for final determination. PREP groups can expect PREP-related GIA applications will be considered specifically for PREP alignment.

The program will offer guidance and opportunities for individual and community resilience efforts, encompassing all four phases of emergency management. Initial staff priorities will focus on supporting early adopter organizations.

PREP activities will concentrate on mitigation and preparation phases to establish program systems, promote shared approaches among PREP Pods, strengthen relationships, and enhance capacities before emergencies occur.

Communities participating in these initiatives are expected to improve their ability to be locally resilient to emergencies compared to those not involved in the resiliency program and may serve as examples for others.

FVRD supplies the overall program structure, and FVRD Emergency Management staff undertake a Train the Trainer function to support Pod Leads and Lead-Assistants in delivering preparedness and resiliency activities.

## **PREP POD LEADS & ALTERNATES**

Each onboarding group will require a community member to be appointed as a “Lead” and may additionally appoint “alternates.” A pod Lead is a designated person who wishes to commit time and efforts toward the success of their local program, and act as the local primary point of contact when liaising between the Fraser Valley Regional District, First Responders, and the community. A Pod Lead will participate in training, lead, and facilitate among their local pod members. The Pod Lead may be the person to uphold the Pod’s responsibilities in their program agreement, or that might be done by the Board of an organization hosting a PREP Pod.

There are almost always people in communities that are passionate about preparedness, readiness, and increasing safety. Being able to communicate clearly and maintain healthy relationships with neighbours is a key consideration for those wishing to lead a PREP Pod. Pod Leads aim to cheer the community forward for greater resiliency. Generally, a Pod Lead will effectively lead and support the Pod members to:

- » Share information with residents on emergency preparedness, local hazards, Alertable FVRD’s emergency alerting, and evacuation protocols and processes.
- » Promote neighborhood self-reliance for up to 14 days without outside help.
- » Develop a Preparedness, Resiliency and Emergency Plan based on local risks and resources using templates and tools provided by FVRD.
- » Track local resiliency & readiness skills and resources (e.g., first aid, caregiving, communications, amateur radio, gas fitter, structural engineers, etc.).
- » Take action to protect any privacy protected personal information collected.
- » Identify potential neighborhood meeting points to gather and share information after a disaster.
- » Set up internal communication and a method to share situational information with and receive updates from the FVRD’s Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), as needed. Pod’s may opt to use a neighbourhood coordination centres (NCCs) concept for information coordination and exchange.
- » Understand the emergency management system in BC and how FVRD’s EOC leads emergency coordination for emergencies that meet the definition of emergency in the Emergency and Disaster Management Act.
- » Help community members to sign up for and set up provincial accounts that expedite ESS support (BCeID app ID and ESS personal profiles).
- » Hold meetings and training sessions and update the Pod’s Preparedness, Resiliency & Emergency Plan as needed and share with FVRD Emergency Management for disaster readiness.
- » Support FireSmart activities and messaging and other risk reduction efforts in collaboration with FVRD’s FireSmart Program Coordinator.

- » Coordinate with the FVRD regarding pre-positioned emergency supplies, if/where applicable.

## **POD MEMBERS**

Pod's are groups of local community members that want to be actively involved in preparedness, risk reduction, neighbourhood-level exercises and drills, and resiliency activities. During a post-disaster period, pod members may also want to be involved in local disaster recovery activities that are not the responsibility of other organizations, such as anniversary reflection events. Pod members will take action to prepared themselves and their families to be more disaster resilient, and may take on projects within the pod that align with their interests. Pod members will participate in in local training sessions and collectively work toward the above goals. During active emergencies, pod members may be aware of likely local impacts and may participate in activities like checking on neighbours, understanding local impacts, providing local non-first responder first aid, and providing situational awareness to the pod Lead to facilitate exchange and liaising with the FVRD EOC or First Responders. This will increase effective response coordination, without duplicating efforts or creating additional risks. Pod members will remember that actions of first responders rest with first responders and must be part of the proper escalation to ensure that even where delayed response times occur, that official response entities are properly activated and engaged through 911 services.

## **PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS**

In addition to PREP Pods, there may also be local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and service providers. The FVRD has processes to onboard formal Emergency Site and Partner agencies, however, local business may wish to offering space, resources, skills, and/or discounts to Pod's to foster the local resiliency initiatives beyond the arrangements with FVRD for emergency use. Additionally, businesses may be local community member and will greatly benefit from learning about preparedness. Prepared businesses are often vital to community re-entry and recovery after disasters, especially when they are food, shelter, and human services businesses.

## **7. PREP POD MODEL**

PREP Pods are the core delivery mechanism for neighbourhood-level resiliency initiatives. Disaster and Emergency Management in BC is stated to have four overlapping phases that may also coincide when multiple emergencies occur at the same time. During each of the phases, a PREP Pod may consider activities that generally align with the intent of that phase.

- » Mitigation Phase – home and neighbourhood activities that reduce risks to known or likely hazards. Example: FireSmart home and neighbourhood activities.
- » Preparedness Phase – be aware of hazard mapping, organize exercises and drills, build connections, share resources, be prepared at home. Example: knowing how to communicate during telecoms and internet failures.
- » Response Phase - act as the local coordination point, communicate with the FVRD EOC, support neighbours safely. Example: gather to share information and establish contact with the FVRD EOC.
- » Recovery Phase – liaise with the FVRD EOC or recovery organization, gather information, reconnect residents, and stabilize home impacts within safe local skillset limitations.

The primary focus of PREP Pods is not response, however, through education, drills, hazard awareness, community engagement and more, when emergencies happen, Pods will be able to know how to stay safe, be organized, and maintain coordination.

**Safe. Organized. Coordinated.**

## 8. HAZARD & RISK PROFILE FOR FVRD

The FVRD covers over 12,000 km<sup>2</sup> of rural and remote terrain, facing hazards such as:

- » Flooding
- » Landslides
- » Extreme weather
- » Infrastructure disruptions
- » Community Isolation
- » Cascading multi-hazard events

Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of these risks. The hazards associated with our landscape are dynamic and many areas were developed with only one road in/out. This is a reality that we must live with and use it to guide our own preparedness actions.

The FVRD takes a proactive approach to hazard awareness through comprehensive and risk reducing land use management processes. Since 1995, FVRD has been a leader in requiring risk assessment and risk reduction as part of land use planning, building and development. As a result of this, we have fewer single-unit emergencies, fewer modern development risk, but areas and buildings developed before 1995 will have pre-existing risk that is higher than post-1995 development. FVRD's proactive approach to geohazard management helps us to have tools that make this information available to our public.

For example, with over 1000 geotechnical reports available on our cloud server, that have also been mapped to our geohazard layer, we have made hazard information highly available for anyone to find and review. However, geotechnical reports can be in the range of dozens to hundreds of pages for each, with complex technical data that is hard to visualize. Complementary to the cloud server of geotechnical reports, FVRD has both a geohazard layer on our public web map and has created a public friendly Hazard Report that describes hazard types in plain language, and uses visuals to show what the most common hazards look like on the landscape. The hazard report is structured with general information in the beginning, followed by electoral area summaries, which allows a reader to focus on the electoral area most relevant to their interests.

PREP Pods can use the hazard information in the hazard report, the electoral area hazard summary, and the geohazard layer on the FVRD web map to be informed of real hazards in their area from a fact-based perspective. This can be helpful in focusing preparedness and resiliency on real hazards rather than perceived hazards. It is natural human behaviour to focus on high attention hazards that gain media traction and ignore very real local hazards due to the lack of media attention.

Neighbourhoods in areas with higher landslide and flood risk might opt to stock sandbags locally, whereas, those in higher wildfire risk areas might opt to focus more resiliency efforts towards FireSmart activities. Areas with balanced risk might focus steadily on household preparedness, and how to support one another throughout winter storms, power outages, and road closures.

However a PREP Pod chooses to focus their resiliency efforts, they will be equally exposed to the same baseline onboarding, and training.

In practical terms, there are things that PREP Pods may wish to understand to help factor local risk. These might include:

- » Knowing the age of your home or building
- » Knowing when your neighbourhood or suburb was developed
- » The level of effort among neighbours to reduce risk on their own property. Collective risk reduction works more holistically than one-off property risk reduction.

As a PREP Pod matures, they may wish to perform a local [Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Assessment \(HRVA\)](#) and share this with the FVRD. The province makes a comprehensive suite of materials to undertake this process either online, or by paper. The BC HRVA lists 57 of the most commonly measured risks in this province. Additionally, the province makes Critical Infrastructure Interdependency Assessment tools available, with training videos too. Using the available tools will help communities make safer decisions about what actions could be taken or not taken when disasters occur and affect

responder access or communication infrastructure. For example, a PREP pod might plan to gather at a local community hall when a disaster occurs, but through a critical infrastructure interdependency assessment may learn that a facility is unusable due to its reliance on energy systems that are de-energized during an emergency.

When a community chooses to use the paper-based HRVA tools, FVRD staff can upload those to the provincial HRVA portal and provide a PDF copy of the outcome summary back the community for use and inclusion in their local Preparedness, Resiliency and Emergency Plan.

FVRD’s Hazard Report summarizes hazards across all electoral areas. It is recognized that PREP Pods might like to take that information and localize it even more. PREP Pods can benefit from this approach because it can further inform actions to take at home or in a neighbourhood to prepare.

<b>Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Tools</b>	<b>Critical Infrastructure Tools</b>
<i>*more tools on the website</i>	<i>*more tools on the website</i>
<a href="#">Online User Guide (PDF, 1.5MB)</a> — this provides information on how to navigate the functionality of the HRVA tool.	<a href="https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/local-emergency-programs/establishing-an-emergency-program/assessment-analysis">https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/local-emergency-programs/establishing-an-emergency-program/assessment-analysis</a>
<a href="#">Companion Guide (PDF, 4.2MB)</a> — this is the comprehensive guide to the 9-step process outlined in the HRVA tool. It is the ‘offline’ version of the HRVA tool and supports the tool by providing more in-depth information on various HRVA considerations such as climate change and risk reduction strategies.	
<a href="#">Hazard Reference Guide (PDF, 1.9MB)</a> — this guide provides information on each of the 57 hazards listed in the HRVA tool, including definitions and links to subject matter expert sources. This information can help communities identify likelihood and consequence scores for each hazard as well as build hazard scenarios.	

If a PREP Pod wishes to use the online option, FVRD staff can explore granting temporary access to the provincial portal, and/or printing the suite of material provided by the province for local offline engagement.

Sharing a local HRVA with the FVRD emergency management staff can help us see where belief about hazards is different than the reality of local hazards. It can also help us to consider where and how to tailor our approaches with your PREP Pod, or guide and direct your Pod to the most appropriate tools, information, and preparedness options. Additionally, it may help us prioritize FVRD EOC activities during emergencies.

## 9. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

### RECRUITMENT & ONBOARDING

PREP Pods are hosted by an organization that is independent of FVRD. A host organization will enter into an agreement with FVRD that outlines the structured and organized relationship and acknowledges

the roles and responsibilities of one another. This is an important step to reduce confusion and establish clear expectations at the beginning of a mutual relationship.

It is up to the host organization of a PREP Pod to determine if they wish to work among their neighbours, create an onboarding process, and determine if they wish to be involved in volunteer management or if community members already being members of their society/association is already enough.

FVRD will provide guidance, mentorship, and support to a host organization and its PREP Pod Lead and alternate by creating train-the-trainer sessions to ready Pod Leads to lead locally among their neighbours and to increase consistency in approaches which will result in increased coordination during emergencies and disasters.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING**

FVRD emergency management staff can source and share information and tools, help to design exercises and drills, and co-facilitate. The aim of FVRD's role in the program is to increase local resiliency and capacity where there are groups wishing to participate in a coordinated and planned manner. It is mutually beneficial for scenarios and exercises to also be shared among the PREP Pod network so that Pods can benefit from each others interests and efforts. FVRD staff will also create opportunities for PREP Pods to exchange ideas, experiences, cross-participate, and network.

Public Outreach – Deliver hazard education, emergency kit guidance, and resilience campaigns.

PREP pods may choose to do in-community outreach and may also participate in public events based on annual preparedness and risk themes such as:

- » Annual Emergency Preparedness Week
- » Fire and Life Safety Day/Fire Prevention Week
- » The Great Shakeout

It is also possible that PREP Pods might like to host and coordinate local FireSmart events, and join into events that are coordinated by their local Fire Department to share preparedness information. Where notice and communication are provided, FVRD emergency management staff can provide FVRD and brochures, printed copies of our Hazard Report and Emergency Management Plan, Master Evacuation Guide, targeted evacuation route guides, and also our Preparedness Workbook. Additionally, we can show PREP Pods where and how to order provincial preparedness information from PreparedBC.

Partnership Development – Engage with businesses, service providers, and NGOs to strengthen support networks.

PREP Pods might feel inspired to engage anyone and everyone on the landscape and this is encouraged, however, it is important to recognize the FVRD has responsibility to establish agreements with emergency sites, and with First Nations Governing Bodies. While we encourage you to be open to exploring inclusive relationships, the focus of PREP is the home and neighbourhood level. It is not expected that PREP Pods would look to secure emergency agreements on behalf of FVRD. Pods may wish to explore their own agreements for use of neighbourhood facilities for meetings, and activities, or local businesses for discounts, and are encouraged to connect business owners that are also neighbourhood residents to explore business continuity so their business may also be ready for disaster.

## **10. ACTIVATION & RESPONSE COORDINATION**

The PREP Framework is grounded in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management. Its purpose is to strengthen local readiness, build resilience, and empower communities

before disasters occur. However, experience shows that when emergencies do happen, people are often the first to act—supporting neighbours, checking on one another, and sharing information long before official resources can reach them.

In a disaster, infrastructure can fail—roads may close, power and internet may go down, and emergency responders may face delays or capacity limits. Recognizing these realities, PREP provides communities with a foundational understanding of the emergency response system—not to replace formal responders, but to help residents make informed, safe, and coordinated decisions that align with official response efforts.

## UNDERSTANDING LOCAL CONTEXTS

Each neighbourhood has unique strengths and challenges.

- » Rural, remote, or boat access areas, for example, often face greater physical isolation, limited services, and slower response times. Yet they also tend to have higher self-sufficiency, close-knit networks, and practical assets such as backup power, wells, or shared tools.
- » Urban and semi-rural areas may have denser populations, greater service access, and established communication channels, but less familiarity between neighbours.

By understanding these different contexts, PREP supports localized approaches to community resilience that build on what already works within each place.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMPLEX SITUATIONS

When a situation is uncertain or rapidly evolving, PREP Pods are encouraged to use the PREP Guiding Principles to inform decisions that prioritize life safety and collective well-being, and pair these with knowledge about the emergency management system, and the roles and responsibilities of official responders to prevent undertaking tasks that are beyond the scope of PREP. The guiding principles are:

**Safe** - Take actions that do not put yourself or others in unnecessary danger.

**Organized** - Work within a planned approach, with defined roles and agreed-upon methods.

**Coordinated** - Share information and work together to maximize resources.

These principles are designed to help communities act responsibly and cohesively when:

- » communications are disrupted
- » responders are delayed or beyond capacity, or
- » roads and infrastructure are impassable.

PREP Pods are not expected to manage emergency response or respond to emergencies, but rather to understand the system well enough to avoid actions that could put people or responders at greater risk, and focus efforts on reducing risks while following guidance from official response organizations or the FVRD EOC.

If an emergency arises where there is an absence of an official response agency, no incident commander locally, or a major systems failure for telephone and internet communications limiting connection to the FVRD Emergency Operations Centre, PREP Pods are to use the guiding principles to measure and weigh decisions so that residents are not put in additional risk by helping neighbours. This will reduce the demands upon responders when they arrive.

## COORDINATION WITH OFFICIAL RESPONSE

In smaller, localized incidents, response is typically led by an Incident Commander (IC) from an Incident Command Post (ICP)—such as a local fire department, police, or roads supervisor.

Incident Commanders can communicate with FVRD Emergency Management through a 24/7 Duty Officer, accessed via E-COMM/Fire Dispatch when an incident is anticipated to or has exceeded routine

incident management capacity. This standardized process ensures that emergency information flows efficiently between responders and the FVRD. PREP Pods should understand that this system is in place and that their role remains focused on readiness and resilience, not tactical response.

Outside the scope of the Emergency and Disaster Management legislative framework, official response agencies may provide instruction or information to a PREP Pod Lead during incidents that do not arise to the level of an emergency that would involve an FVRD EOC. In these cases, Pod Leads accept instructions, and work within them under the oversight of the relevant agency directing the additional support.

When large-scale events occur, that meet the definition of 'emergency' in the Emergency and Disaster Management Act, the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) may activate an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to coordinate response activities, resource activation, deployments, evacuee supports, and cost recovery processes.

During EOC activations, PREP Pod members communicate with their Pod Lead, and Pod Leads communicate with the FVRD EOC Operations Section Chief, unless they are communicating through an Incident Commander, who is then communicating with the FVRD EOC Operations Section Chief. It is important to ensure one effective communication and instruction channel occur.

## **EVACUATION AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

Evacuation Orders are issued when necessary to protect life safety. PREP Pods must always follow these orders and never use guiding principles to decide whether to stay or go. Their role during an evacuation is to:

- » amplify official evacuation messaging within their networks,
- » help neighbours safely leave the area, especially those needing assistance, and
- » evacuate themselves as directed.

## **VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS**

Communities with seasonal or visitor populations may encounter unaffiliated or spontaneous volunteers during an emergency—people who want to help but are not part of a PREP Pod. In these cases, Pods may apply the PREP guiding principles to engage such people safely and effectively, while maintaining alignment with official guidance.

## **POD ACTIVATION OVERVIEW**

When a Pod is informally "activated" during an event:

- » Leads assess the situation.
- » Members communicate to share information and check on safety.
- » Actions are determined using the PREP guiding principles and in accordance with official instructions, from whichever authority is the oversight authority (FVRD EOC or Incident Commander).

PREP's role in response is not tactical/operational—it is foundational. By preparing communities to understand systems, communicate effectively, and act safely, PREP enhances the collective capacity of residents and responders alike—ensuring that when emergencies do occur, neighbours are ready to help without harm, and without taking on the responsibilities of others.

Accurate and timely information is essential to prevent misinformation and disinformation. During emergency situations the FVRD is the communication authority, while PREP Pods and members are encouraged to share our information. Pods exchange information from community to and through the EOC and the EOC back through Pods. Pods are not creating their own public media messaging, nor are Pods engaging directly with media about the emergency situation. An essential Pod role is redirecting media engagement to the FVRD Information Officer. This will reduce the likelihood of misinformation

and reduce liability and risk to each Pod. Pod Leads are FVRD's trusted allies in spreading accurate and credible information from trusted sources, and vice versa.

## 11. EMERGENCY SITE PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

An emergency site may be any building that is potentially able to be opened during an emergency, at the request of the FVRD. These sites may support emergency response efforts by providing shelter, feeding, evacuation services, etc. Any site that has potential for people to gather safely, receive information, and also possibly sleep, eat, cook, and care for one another in a group setting may be considered as a potential emergency site (e.g. churches, gymnasiums, community halls, neighbourhood amenity rooms, businesses, schools, etc.) Having a list of potential emergency sites willing to open their doors and coordinate support with your own members, staff or volunteers that are already part of the facility management team is invaluable to community resiliency.

If you are with an organisation wishing to know more about how to have a community-owned building, site, or facility considered for onboarding as a potential emergency site, FVRD invites you to identify this. Emergency Site consideration is managed independently of PREP to ensure clear understanding of when, why, and how the FVRD requests activation of emergency sites during emergency coordination events. However, FVRD recognizes that the same organization interested in PREP may also own facilities. We invite further exploration if this is of interest as it relates to the local pre-positioning of readiness and resiliency supplies and materials.

We recognize that during large-scale disasters, communities might self-activate to share information, share locally available resources, and support one another. Self-activation for community support is welcomed, but not eligible for cost recovery unless formally requested.

### WHAT TO EXPECT AS AN EMERGENCY SITE PARTNER:

- **Site Assessment & Agreement**  
FVRD Emergency Management (EM) personnel will assess facilities to determine suitable emergency uses. This includes reviewing potential roles, capacity, and alignment with provincial regulations and facility policies.
- **Pre-event Readiness & Supplies**  
Sites may store pre-positioned emergency supplies and are encouraged to seek grant funding for preparedness resources. FVRD may provide guidance on supply needs based on local hazards and may support eligible grant applications.
- **Site Activation & Compensation**  
Sites may self-activate for community support; however, compensation is only provided when formally requested to activate by FVRD. Any associated fees will be determined in advance in consultation with site representatives and through pre-established arrangements.
- **Annual Review**  
Site representatives are expected to review their facility's assessment annually and update FVRD on any changes, particularly after-hours contact information.
- **Grant Support**  
Facilities that have entered into an agreement with FVRD may benefit from letters of support for non-FVRD grants, access to FireSmart rebate support not limited to risk class, and Grant In Aid.

Facility owner/operators interested in becoming an Emergency Site are invited to connect with FVRD Emergency Management personnel to explore the opportunity.

## 12. FUNDING, GRANT SOURCES & INSURANCE

PREP Pods can fund their activities in a myriad of ways. While many preparedness activities can be accomplished without cost, there are considerable opportunities that do require funding to achieve.

The FVRD Grant In Aid (GIA) program allows PREP Pods to apply for GIA when an application aligns with the intent of PREP. The Province of BC provides the GIA structure and FVRD administers GIA as per the Grant In Aid policy and application process. From time to time, elected representatives make choices about which projects to fund, and for what amount. To support GIA applications through the lens of PREP, funding will not be approved for applications related to tactical operations, activities that breach laws, bylaws, or duplicate the services of other service providers. FVRD Electoral Area Directors may wish to support GIA applications that are in support of preparedness and resiliency initiatives.

Encouraged activities include:

- » Introduction to Emergency Management in Canada
- » First Aid training
- » Psychological First Aid
- » Mental Health First Aid
- » Food Safe training
- » Freeze dried emergency food kits
- » Long-life emergency water and food
- » Pre-positioned disaster survival supplies
- » Amateur Radio training and equipment
- » Incident Command System 100, 200,
- » Emergency Support Services training and courses

Facilities that are onboarded as Emergency Sites may also consider GIA applications for projects such as:

- » Installation of generators that power groundwater well pumps
- » Reduce disaster risks and hazards around the site
- » Train staff/volunteers in the above options

FVRD may choose to purchase supplies that help us achieve our common interests to increase resiliency across the landscape, if aligned with Board-approved work plans, or grant supported initiatives. FVRD EM staff will target pre-positioning of supplies based on sites with signed agreements, insurance to cover stored items on site, and a willingness to be contacted during emergencies regardless of the hour.

FVRD also supports access to other grant opportunities. Our EM team is able to provide letters of support to any group/site we have an agreement with in support of other grant applications. PREP pods and sites may also find eligibility for rebates and activity support through our FireSmart program funding.

Associations, Groups, Societies, Strata Corporations, etc. should consider the relevance of the preparedness and mitigation activities they are participating in, and seek insurance to cover their Board and their members for those purposes, and may wish to consider whether the parameters of the Good Samaritan Act apply to organizations and their membership.

People who are already members of an organization generally do not also need to become 'volunteers' of the association, however, if a PREP Pod opts to use the language 'volunteer' it should consider the responsibilities that it may incur for management of 'workers' under the Workers Compensation Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

## 13. SUSTAINABILITY & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

### POD REVIEWS AND IMPROVEMENTS

PREP groups are encouraged to undertake a yearly self-evaluation to strengthen their neighborhood's resilience and keep their emergency plans up to date. This process supports continuous improvement,

collaboration with FVRD Emergency Management, and helps identify opportunities for training, engagement, and community connection.

An annual review may look different within each PREP Pod, however, in its most basic form a Pod will review their plan and determine where and how they can deepen resiliency based on the plan, or if the plan is to be improved. Annual reviews can help Pods identify desirable training or wanted skills, and may also identify engagement opportunities within the community, and community contact updates.

Overall, this annual review keeps PREP Pods ready, connected, and adaptable, ensuring preparedness grows stronger each year.

## **FVRD REVIEWS AND IMPROVEMENTS**

FVRD will monitor our engagement with Pod Leads, our presentations, program effectiveness based on feedback, and areas for program and template improvement, in addition to considering the role of Pods in disasters and capturing . Our focus is creating capacity at the community level which includes the creation of a common and organized series of templates. We may collect learning experiences from post disaster after action reviews and through dissemination of occasional surveys seeking targeted feedback on PREP.

PREP Leads have a direct line of communication with the FVRD Emergency Management program staff and feedback is welcomed year-round. Pod members feedback is best provided to the PREP Pod Lead to ensure it is captured and shared with FVRD Emergency Management Staff, and comingled with feedback from other Pods. FVRD will facilitate opportunities for Pods to exchange their knowledge, experiences, stories and ideas with one another. As new common approaches are learned and exchanged between Pod these may be reflected in future program material updates. Information is also welcomed for sharing in public communications.

## **14. APPENDICES & TOOLS**

- » Educational and preparedness resource package
- » PREP Lead Training & onboarding materials
- » Pod Community workshop materials
- » Pod Resiliency Plan template
- » Funding opportunities and information for Pods
- » Community Contact and resource list template
- » Community Readiness Survey and Dashboard template
- » Individual and Household Preparedness Guide
- » Spontaneous Public Helpers Coordination Guide