



EMERGENCY SERVICES

OVERVIEW

Provision of Emergency Services to First Nations continues to be an ongoing issue. First Nations communities are affected by emergency events to a greater extent due to their remoteness, lack of critical security infrastructure, resources and capacity. There is a substantial disparity for First Nations under the four pillars of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery between First Nations and that of communities of similar size and circumstance throughout Canada. This disparity is further enhanced by the lack of inclusion and engagement of First Nations in the development and signing of the Emergency Service Agreements currently being negotiated between Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the provinces.

Severe weather events from climate change will compound these issues and its effects will continue to impact First Nations in the future. ISC's Emergency Management (EM) Assistance Program works with provincial and territorial governments and non-government organizations to support First Nations and ensure they have access to comparable emergency assistance services available to other residents in their respective jurisdiction. First Nations and organizations are able to access this funding for non-structural mitigation projects through this program.

Resolution 03/2015, *First Nations Involvement in Emergency Preparedness*, called on the Government to include First Nations in the development of agreements with First Nations related to mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery planning, as well as continue to ensure ISC and provincial partners work collaboratively with First Nations leaders. There has been a change in how the Government is now negotiating these Service Agreements in that First Nation organizations are more involved.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) continues to be involved in Public Safety Canada (PSC) discussions with F/P/T Ministers Responsible for Emergencies. A dedicated meeting with the five NIOs was convened in St. John's, Newfoundland on May 25, 2017. The purpose of the meeting was to identify priorities, gaps and challenges.

In March 2017, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC), on behalf of the Government of Canada welcomed representatives for the Fifth Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas in Montreal, Québec. A key element of the Regional Platform was the Second Meeting of Ministers and High Level Authorities, during which a Regional Action Plan (RAP) was approved. The guidelines for the RAP were endorsed at the First Meeting of Ministers and

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High Level Authorities in Paraguay in June 2016. The Government of Canada has been working with regional and national partners to assist with drafting the RAP. AFN ensured First Nations interests were included in the RAP.

PSEPC has been mandated by the Prime Minister to: “work with provinces and territories, Indigenous Peoples, and municipalities to develop a comprehensive action plan that allows Canada to better predict, prepare for, and respond to weather-related emergencies and natural disasters”.

In response, PSEPC and Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management (SOREM) are developing an EM Strategy for Canada to advance a whole-of-society approach to strengthen EM in Canada.

The EM strategy will be framed around the following strategic objectives:

- Enhance whole-of-society collaboration and governance to strengthen resilience.
- Improve the understanding of disaster risks in all sectors of society.
- Increase focus on whole-of-society disaster prevention and mitigation activities.
- Enhance disaster response capacity and coordination and foster the development of new capabilities.
- Strengthen recovery efforts by building back better to minimize the impacts of future disasters.

AFN was invited to attend the Meeting of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management (SOREM) meeting in Regina, Saskatchewan on November 15, 2017. At the meeting, participants discussed; updated and reviewed the Inventory of Emergency Management Capabilities in Indigenous Communities; Disaster Mitigation; Response and Recovery in Indigenous communities; and, Supporting the Involvement of Indigenous Communities in Emergency Management.

UPDATE

PSEPC is planning engagements with First Nations to seek input and provide information on three key EM initiatives—the EM Strategy for Canada, the Public Safety Broadband Network, and Search and Rescue governance. AFN will receive funding from PSEPC to facilitate these engagements. The first workshop is planned for June 2018, with the subsequent workshops to be organized over the 2018/19 fiscal year.

AFN was also invited to the National Roundtable on Flood Risk called by Minister

Goodale, Public Safety and Emergency Canada, to discuss Understanding Risk, Access and Distribution of Flood Maps, Public Awareness of Risk, and the Financial Management of Flood Risk. An advisory committee on Flood risk is being established and First Nations representation will be included.

As of March 16, 2018, there is currently a total of 3,060 long term evacuees due to floods (3017), wildfires (29), and tornadoes (4).

NEXT STEPS

- As directed by 2017 AGA Resolutions 06/2017, *Support for British Columbia First Nations Affected by Wildfire Crisis*, and 46/2017, *Support for First Nations Emergency Services Society of British Columbia*, AFN will support First Nation organizations and communities in the development of their emergency management regimes and for First Nation managed and driven mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities.
- AFN will continue to follow up on direction from Resolution 03/2015, *First Nation Involvement in Emergency Preparedness*.
- AFN has begun working with PSEPC to facilitate engagement workshops with First Nations to develop the Inventory of Emergency Management Capabilities in Indigenous Communities, and to examine flood risks, awareness, mapping, and financial management.
- AFN will continue to work with PSC to lead the national engagement on Canada's National Emergency Strategy, Broad Band Initiative, and Search and Rescue.
- AFN is planning to hold the second annual National Emergency Management Forum in June 2018.

