



**REGULAR MEETING OF  
EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

Tuesday, July 30, 2024, 11:00 a.m.  
Remote Meeting via Teams

For information on how to participate: <https://www.whistler.ca/municipal-gov/committees/emergency-planning-committee>

- PRESENT:** BC Ambulance Service Representative, R. Larkin  
Whistler Blackcomb Representative, J. Lawther  
Whistler Transit Ltd. Representative, C. Gomez  
RMOW Emergency Social Services Coordinator, K. Hannah  
RMOW Emergency Program Coordinator, B. Manson  
RMOW General Manager Infrastructure Services, J. Hallisey  
RMOW General Manager Community Engagement and Cultural Services, K. Elliott  
RMOW Chief Administrative Officer, V. Cullen  
RMOW Manager Protective Services, L. DeBou  
RMOW Councilor, J. Ford  
BC Ambulance Service Representative, L. Wu  
RCMP Sergeant SO, N. Miller
- ABSENT:** School District #48 Representative, I. Currie  
BC Ambulance Service Representative, L. Darlington  
Whistler Search and Rescue Society Representative, T. DelBosco  
Mayor, J. Crompton  
Vancouver Coastal Health Representative, Dr. M Khaketla  
RCMP Staff Sergeant, S. Banks  
RMOW General Manager Corporate Services and Public Safety, T. Battiston  
RMOW Fire Chief, T. Doherty  
Blackcomb Helicopters Representative, D. Marcoux
- STAFF PRESENT:** RMOW Bylaw and Licencing Coordinator, C. Burford
- OTHERS:** Pauline Lysaght, RMOW (On behalf of Ted Battiston)  
James Whalen, Vancouver Coastal Health (On behalf of Dr. Moliehi Khaketla)  
David Harrison, Skwxwú7mesh Nation guest speaker  
David McPhee, Whistler Blackcomb Representative
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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

*J. Ford recognized the Resort Municipality of Whistler is grateful to be on the shared, unceded territory of the Lílwat People, known in their language as Lílwat7úl, and the*

*Squamish People, known in their language as Skwxwú7mesh. We respect and commit to a deep consideration of their history, culture, stewardship and voice.*

**2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Moved By RMOw Manager Protective Services, L. DeBou

Seconded By RMOw Emergency Social Services Coordinator, K. Hannah

**That** Emergency Planning Committee adopt the Regular Committee Meeting agenda of July 30th 2024.

CARRIED

**3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

Moved By RMOw Manager Protective Services, L. DeBou

Seconded By RMOw Corporate Officer, P. Lysaght

**That** Emergency Planning Committee adopt the Regular Committee Meeting minutes of April 30th 2024.

CARRIED

**4. PRESENTATIONS AND DELEGATIONS**

**4.1 Emergency Planning Committee Report**

B. Manson gave an update on the Jasper fire.

Jasper is within Parks Canada jurisdiction and in a different eco-region the behaviours for fires can be very different to the coastal fires we experience. The terms used may be different.

4700 Residents

10,000 Guests

15,000 Park Users

July 22nd

19:00: A small fire broke out near the transfer station. 2 other fires started nearby which merged together to create large fire very quickly.

21:59: An evacuation order was sent out which gave people 5 hours to leave

July 23rd

Valemount was full as people evacuating, with no room for accommodation

The power in Jasper was lost

July 24th

Fire was 8km South of the Town of Jasper but with high winds of 100km/hr the NE and S fires merged

18:40: The fires reached town

A copy of the alert was shown, which showed how brief with not many details. This is ideal as more information can lead to confusion and additional questions. The order was sent out in a sufficient time and the messaging was effective

*J. Ford asked why an alert was issued and not an order?*

*B. Manson said it is because Alberta has different wording.*

*L. Wu asked if further information was sent out to the evacuees?*

*B. Manson confirmed this was provided in follow up messaging.*

The main highway out is Highway 16 that feeds into BC, however BC Emergency Management were directing evacuees back to Alberta. The highway out was full, but everything was managed well and for those individuals who did not have vehicles, four assembly points were set up that had buses to transport people out.

There were long lines at the gas stations which were operational until the power went out.

It took evacuees 7 hours to reach Valemount, which is normally a 45-minute journey.

When the evacuation alert went out the wording was the fire was expected to reach them in 5 hours which was incorrect. This was highly criticized in politics, but municipalities do not always have the correct information and this particular alert was sent out at 22:18 so urgency and stress were most likely factors.

*P. Lysaght asked if all the messaging came from Jaspers municipality?*

*B. Manson confirmed Parks Canada sent out their own messaging.*

Rapid Visual Damage Assessment, which is a quick drive by to note the damage of the buildings, was shown for the town. Was noted that fire isn't a wall and can miss houses directly next to them, which is why some houses weren't damaged.

Parks Canada provided photos on their social media channels showing historical structures that were unaffected/saved to give the public some updates.

8 fire fighters lost their homes, as well as the Fire Chief and the Mayor.

Out of 1113 structures, 358 were destroyed. The Hospital, Library, Fire Hall, School and Water Treatment were all unaffected.

During the sweep, it was found 44 residents had not evacuated, the RCMP were called to assist with removing the remaining people.

#### Recovery

- Assessments
- Re-entry plans
- Supervised visits
- Restoration to all critical infrastructure.
- Hazard/Dust mitigation
- Debris removal
- Fridge disposal (since power has been off for multiple days)
- Disaster assistance
- Psychological recovery (People may not want to return due to personal safety issues)
- Community

*J. Hallisey asked if active fire prevention saved the structures?*

*B. Manson said they took a defensive fire prevention approach, which focused on saving critical infrastructure.*

#### 4.2 Round Table

Members of the committee shared what they had prepared other than a full tank of gas and a go bag.

B. Manson: Radio Scanner

L. DeBou: Pet Food

V. Cullen: Knowing where her children are and having a back up plan to get them into a vehicle to evacuate

K. Hannah: Fireproof safe for documents

J. Hallisey: Drawer that contains cash and documents

J. Ford: Fire smart assessment for property

P. Lysaght: Removing biathlon firearms and ammunition when evacuating

N. Miller: RV Trailer set up ready to go

R. Larkin: Cooler ready to grab and go

L. Wu: Items in a waterproof bag

D. McPhee: A go back in each vehicle

C. Gomez: Making sure their kids know the plan and where they are

J. Whalen: In Reach device

J. Lawther: Generator

D. Harrison: Rubbermaid with go bag in it containing photocopies of documents, money and medical prescriptions.

#### **4.3 Presentation by the Skwxwú7mesh Nation guest speaker, David Harrison**

David Harrison, Senior Manager, Emergency Planning and Response for the Skwxwú7mesh Nation.

The Squamish Nation is both on and off of reserves and includes Fire Smart, Safety, Hazards and Cultural Sites)

Last year a wildfire started on the Squamish Nation, this fire was human caused from individuals shooting guns during a provincial fire ban.

The Squamish Nation works closely with BC Hydro and BC Wildfire and extended recommendations to work with Whistler as a neighbouring community.

In 2022 a Wildfire Resiliency Plan was produced to look into the hazards, risks and vulnerabilities and recommendations to work with other jurisdictions such as Village of Pemberton, District of Squamish, Squamish Lillooet Regional District and Resort Municipality of Whistler.

David provided what the plan detailed:

##### Mitigation

- Fuel Reduction
- Community engagement for fire smart days

##### Preparedness

- Protection Plan
- BC Wild Service Response Plan
- Training and Exercises
- Their own notification system called Voyent Alert!

##### Recovery

- Restore to the same or better
- Looking to better processes to speed up recovery process

The Squamish Nation does cultural burnings/controlled burns and would like to involve and work together with Whistler when the fire ratings are low.

There is a legal requirement for alerts to be shared with neighbouring jurisdictions, suggested to work with Whistler on a collaboration for a shared messaging.

When there is a recovery period, working together as the Squamish Nation and Whistler will speed up this process.

Activation of the Emergency Plan for the Squamish Nation can be done by the following individuals:

- Squamish Nation Chairperson/Council member
- CAO
- Executive Director of Community Services
- Senior Manager, Emergency Planning and Response

A list of these contact numbers can be provided.

The Squamish Nation can active their own EOC and can work with Whistler if support is required. There are 2 locations an EOC can be activated both will be provided with trained staff, the first on the North Shore at Mosquito Creek and the second is in the Squamish, at Totem Hall. The Structure of the EOC covers operations, planning, logistics and finance.

It is important to prioritise protecting cultural values such as village sites and burial sites. Within Whistler a priority to protect the Squamish Lillooet Cultural Center as it contains a number of cultural irreplaceable historical items. The Squamish Nation would be able to provide extra resources if needed.

*J. Ford thanked David for the value of this information*

*V. Cullen said it is useful to know that an EOC can be set up by the Squamish Nation if required in the future.*

*J. Ford ask if the Squamish Nation works directly with North Shore Emergency Management?*

*D. Harrison confirmed they do and the 3 reserves on the North Shore have a combined evacuation plan. This means no duplication of work and a regional coordination.*

*K. Elliot asked within the Sacred Nation Land Use Plan what is the best way to know where they are in the shared territories?*

*D. Harrison said they have an internal GIS/Data base that has all the locations. If wildfires happen then they will be identified to first responders, this way they can protect certain areas but will still stay private.*

#### 4.4 Review of Whistler Blackcomb's capabilities during emergencies

James Lawther provided a review of Whistler Blackcomb's resources, a number of previous tabletop exercises in WB and also in collaboration with the RMOW has made the collaboration stronger.

- Gondolas can be utilized to transport people into the Alpine and surrounding areas
- WB has 38 Off road vehicles that can be utilized, as well as a network of trails and tracks on the mountains
- Contractors working for Whistler Blackcomb can be called into assist with efforts as they are under terms with WB.
- Unique off-road trucks are available to transport large amounts of items or people.

*J. Ford asked what is the capacity of the water system in the summer if there was a fire to happen?*

*J. Lawther said they have access to the Horstman and Fitz Streams and the snow making machines stay charged in the summer for fire suppression and containment.*

*L. DeBou asked if there are water backpacks in the vehicles?*

*J. Lawther confirmed all the vehicles have fire suppression backpacks. There are also 5 fire boxes across both mountains.*

Whistler Blackcomb's emergency management

- Structured daily
- ICS Structure in emergencies
- Commander for local and incidents
- Senior Manager support and running the ICS Structure

*V. Cullen asked if we need to evacuate to the alpine do the structures have supplies such as blankets and food?*

*J. Lawther there are minimal supplies up there, if a shelter in place is required then supplies can be sent up with the specialized vehicles.*

*V. Cullen asked what is the capacity per hour for sending people up in the gondolas?*

*J. Lawther said it is 3600 ppl/hr. They can be run even if power is off as they back up on diesel.*

**5. OTHER BUSINESS**

B. Manson shared the EOC updates

- BC Transit have a new emergency management position who will be responsible for disaster response transportation.
- There are no notable fires in the area currently
- We are in a draught level 1 even with the recent rain. Might see trees turning brown and die if they cannot access water.

J. Ford shared there is an evacuation alert out of Poole Creek in the SLRD due to a landslide.


J. Ford also suggested having a Terms of Reference review for the EPC as a future topic.

**6. TERMINATION**

That Emergency Planning Committee terminate the Regular Committee Meeting of date July 30th 2024



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Mayor, J. Crompton



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Recording Secretary, C. Burford