
TO: Electoral Area Services Committee **MEETING:** June 11, 2019
FROM: Catherine Morrison **FILE:** 7130-01 ESS
Manager, Emergency Services
Subject: Emergency Support Services Update

RECOMMENDATION

That the Emergency Support Services Update be received for information.

SUMMARY

Under the Emergency Program Act, the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) is responsible for responding to emergencies in our area including coordinating Emergency Support Services (ESS). Residents who have been evacuated or displaced from their homes by fires, floods, earthquakes or other emergencies may receive ESS for up to 72 hours. Services may include food, lodging, clothing, emotional support, information about the emergency or disaster, family reunification and specialized services such as first aid, child minding, pet care and transportation.

Volunteers are the lifeline of RDN emergency planning and response. Volunteer ESS teams throughout the region help to provide services required to preserve the well being of people affected by an emergency or disaster. Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC) provides the essential legal authority to recognize volunteer groups in responding to emergency situations. Registered Public Safety Lifeline volunteers (ESS, Search and Rescue and Amateur Radio) are eligible for Worker's Compensation benefits and basic expenses, with additional support available in the way of coordination and training.

BACKGROUND

The RDN collaborates with and supports four ESS teams that respond to the immediate needs of evacuees. This support includes reception centre, livestock sheltering and supplier agreements, ESS supplies, mobile ESS trailers, pet care supplies, and more. In the past year, the teams have activated reception centres, warming centres and have registered and referred residents displaced from their homes. The teams have attended training and exercises together along with the City of Nanaimo ESS team and have learned from each other's experience and expertise.

Specialized ESS services are provided by collaborating with support organizations and EMBC. In addition, the RDN has provisions in place with Recreation and Parks and the Transit Departments. Recreation program staff are able to provide child care services in support of ESS Reception Centre activations that may require child care. All RDN Recreation and Parks staff, term instructors and contractors undergo a criminal record check upon hire. These individuals have experience providing recreation programming for children and are an excellent resource that can be utilized in collaboration with an active EOC and the ESS teams. To further support ESS and emergency response, the RDN has a policy in place for the utilization of transit buses for evacuations and mobile Reception Centres.

A brief overview of the four ESS teams within the RDN is provided below.

Oceanside ESS

In 2010 the RDN, City of Parksville and Town of Qualicum entered into an Emergency Resource Agreement (ERA). The ERA provides a Regional ESS and Emergency Communications Team response capability to the City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum and Electoral Areas E, F, G and H of the RDN. In 2015, the ERA was updated to increase funding to support a Regional Emergency Program Volunteer Coordinator contract position. This position is responsible and accountable for the staffing and administration of emergency support and communication service volunteers.

Currently the Oceanside Emergency Communications Team (OECT) supports 15 active members. The OECT team has established a solid network of communication pathways with Bamfield, Tofino, Ucluelet, Campbell River, Comox, Courtenay, Power River, Port Alberni Gabriola Island, Bowen Island and Nanaimo. The OECT has both voice and digital emergency communications capabilities from the EOCs in Parksville and Qualicum in addition to the 7 designated Reception Centres. The RDN EOC emergency communications supported by the Coast Emergency Communications Association (CECA) also has the capabilities to communicate with the OECT teams at any of the locations.

The Oceanside Emergency Support Services (OESS) currently supports 39 active volunteers and 10 non-active volunteers. The volunteers are located throughout the response area from the Lighthouse/Bowser area to Nanoose Bay. In 2018, the OESS team was tasked with 18 calls, this is more level one activations than any other year since the OESS team was established. OESS meets monthly to train and run exercises alongside OECT. In 2019, the team has so far run four exercises at different reception centres and plan to complete further exercises including neighbourhood evacuations, mobile Reception Centres, and evacuee registration and referrals.

Gabriola ESS

The Gabriola ESS is comprised of Pets and Livestock Services (PALS) and ESS run entirely by volunteers supported by the RDN. The Gabriola Fire Department has provided space at the fire hall to store ESS kits and pet supplies. The RDN has also supplied a fully stocked mobile ESS trailer that is kept on Gabriola with the volunteer ESS leader that can be setup anywhere.

The Gabriola ESS and PALS teams are comprised of approximately 50 volunteers and have dedicated countless hours coordinating food, supplies, and volunteers for the activation of the warming centre during the December windstorm and to support first responders throughout the year this included supporting residents and their pets from 100 Mile House that were displaced

by fires. The team has worked with Ground Search and Rescue for the coordination of food services, have completed wellness checks, level one responses for residents affected by house fires and continue to support the community with many aspects of support services.

Coast Emergency Communications Association has 40 volunteers and provides emergency communications for the southern half of the RDN, Electoral Areas A, B and C. On Gabriola, CECA has emergency communication capabilities at the Fire Hall, the designated Reception Centre and portable grab and go bags that are available to be setup at any location. The setup at the Gabriola Fire Hall currently serves as a hub for digital traffic for the Victoria office of EMBC and allows CECA to support radio communications around the world. In 2016, all telecommunications to Gabriola were severed when a barge incident cut the telecommunications lines, this included the ability of some residents to dial 9-1-1. CECA was able to support emergency radio communications for almost a week while repairs were being undertaken. In 2019, CECA has conducted a radio exercise with BC Wildfire and the Gabriola Fire Department and on June 8th CECA and Gabriola ESS will be conducting a larger scale exercise to familiarize all volunteers with the Gabriola radio room, Reception Centre setup, portable radio setups and evacuation sites.

Lantzville ESS

The RDN and District of Lantzville have entered into an Emergency Planning Agreement for the RDN to provide Emergency Planning Services which includes coordinating ESS. The Lantzville ESS team is comprised of 12 volunteers. The team meets the third Thursday of every month for training and exercises. The Lantzville Legion has provided space for the monthly group meetings as well as storage for the Reception Centre supplies. In June, the Lantzville team will host an open house and give the public an opportunity to view a mock Reception Centre setup.

The Lantzville ESS team is very active and has supported the RDN and District of Lantzville with community events, level one responses and were instrumental during the December 20th windstorm where volunteers travelled to the Cranberry Hall to open a reception centre to support 16 evacuees and in the following days, additional volunteers assisted with the Warming Centre activation at the Cedar Community Hall. So far in 2019, the level one team has assisted the Lantzville Fire Department with providing ESS to two families displaced from their homes due to fire.

Southern Communities ESS

Electoral Area A and C of the RDN have had low volunteer turn outs and the RDN has been supported by the City of Nanaimo ESS volunteers and the Lantzville ESS volunteers in providing ESS response to the area. In 2019, RDN Emergency Services started a recruitment campaign with newsletters and events hosted in April and May in Cedar, Cranberry and Extension with the successful recruitment of nine new volunteers. The first ESS monthly meeting will be held on May 28th to register the new volunteers and start the training.

Plans for 2019 will include selecting a monthly meeting schedule, registering for training, participating in exercises and assisting with ESS activations. The new volunteers will get hands on experience with support from RDN emergency services, the City of Nanaimo ESS team, Lantzville ESS team, and Oceanside ESS team.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the Emergency Support Services Update be received for information.
2. That alternate direction be provided.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The collaboration and support of ESS has been accounted for in the budget resulting in no additional costs.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Focus On Relationships- We Recognize All Volunteers As An Essential Component Of Service Delivery. We Will Support The Recruitment And Retention Of Volunteers



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May 23, 2019

Reviewed by:

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- P. Carlyle, Chief Administrative Officer