

2024 SEP Executive Committee Meeting Update - December 3, 2024

Season Review (Activations)

The 2023/2024 winter snowpack was below normal, and the melt was extended over the Spring, so Freshet did not require a response from SEP. The Shuswap Lake Level peaked well below normal on June 16th (347.571m), leveled off and began dropping by early July, making drought a concern. It is now close to average for this time of year.

The EOC was activated in the boardroom on July 17 after a significant number of lightning strikes in the Shuswap Area caused wildfires including some that required Evacuation Alerts and Orders. These larger fires included:

- The **Lower Blueberry Creek fire (K41061)** located **above Dasnier's Bay** in the Seymour Arm area, where SPU and FireSmart resources were deployed.
- The **Mara Mountain fire July 18, 2024 (K41070)** located near the 2021 Two Mile fire burn scar above Sicamous. BC Wildfire deemed it was not a threat to any structures.
- **Newsome Creek K41454**, Elson Rd, Evac Alert issued for 14 addresses near Sorrento July 23, Evac Alert lifted July 27
- **Hullcar Mtn K41796**, discovered Aug 4, Evac Alert for 59 properties Aug 5, Evac Order for 17 properties Aug 6, Evac Order issued and expanded Evac Alert Aug 7, Evac Order downgraded to Alert Aug 11, Being Held Aug 11, Evacuation Alerts and Orders, All Clear Aug 14, 2024
- **Dogtooth wildfire N21427**, discovered July 22, 2024, where the SEP EOC Supported the Golden and Area Emergency Management Program. The Evacuation Alert was lifted on Aug 21.
- **Sicamous Bruhn Bridge MVA (Transport Truck)**, On August 24, 2024, several first response agencies were involved to secure the scene, recover the driver, contain the diesel spill and clean up the site. The Shuswap Emergency Program assisted with coordinating communications, monitoring the response, and recovery of response costs for the Sicamous Fire Department.

EOC After Action Review (AAR) 2023 & 2024

2023

The summer of 2023 was the most destructive wildfire season on record in British Columbia and posed significant challenges to the CSRD and the Province. The Bush Creek East Wildfire was the largest disaster in the history of the Shuswap area and was the largest EOC activation experienced by the Shuswap Emergency Program. Numerous challenges

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arose that were dealt with effectively by innovative and resilient staff. The safe evacuation of the North and South Shuswap areas (over 8,000 residents) affected by the wildfire with very little advanced notice was the single biggest challenge faced by the EOC.

The Shuswap Emergency Program hired a consultant to conduct a series of surveys and in-person engagement sessions with CSRD EOC staff to gather feedback and organize it in a useful format with recommendations for improvement. Many of the recommendations identified have already been completed or are in progress.

The following opportunities for continuous improvement were identified from the 2023 EOC AAR:

- **Communication & Information sharing** with assisting agencies, the public, and staff.
 - Alertable mapping issue was fixed.
- **Advanced Planning** (Reinforced the importance of establishing the Advanced Planning role earlier for large events)
- **Evacuation management**
 - Establish an Evacuation Branch Director position
 - Temporary Access Permit System (share best practices with neighbouring LGs and work toward regional approach if possible)
- **EOC Facility** (Review primary, alternate and regional options)
- **Staffing capacity** (plan with overlap of shifts, max hours & days, and supplemented with contract staff)
- **Training and exercises** (expand)
 - **Process Efficiency** (including flowcharts, checklists, daily planning cycle)
 - **Documentation and records management**
- **Business continuity plans** (Should be developed by all CSRD departments)
- **Resource lists and tracking** (expand and update)
- **Donations management** (develop new capacity)
- **Debris management** (Updating plans)

2024

The CSRD held a brief After Action Review of the 2024 season with CSRD staff that participated in the EOC. SEP staff captured notes of the feedback received and organized it into themes.

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Major themes from the 2024 SEP EOC were:

- **Communications**
 - Improved assisting agency relationships (BCWS/RCMP), supported RAEMP & GAEMP
 - Public engagement (Satellite locations) in Silver Creek
 - Reviewing agency information sharing practices
- **Staffing/Capacity**
 - Increased from previous years with new FireSmart staff in EOC and completing risk reduction work in the field.
 - Continued using CSRD fire department members in EOC and field and trained additional GIS person.
 - Continue work on EOC staff succession planning
 - Field Liaison role utilized for increased support and situational awareness
- **Process**
 - Improved processes from experience in 2023
 - Daily Management Briefings
 - Section roles and responsibilities
 - Use of forms
- **Training**
 - Staff utilized 2023 experience and reinforced recent training
- **EOC Facility**
 - Streamlined EOC activation and set up based on 2023 experience.
- **Evacuation Management**
 - Temporary Access Permits
 - Made improvements.
 - Need dedicated permit approval staff in the EOC.
 - Security options and improvements
 - Shuswap SAR follow up meeting to find efficiencies in notification process
- **ESS**
 - ESS provided to evacuees of Hullcar Mountain wildfire using the Evacuee Registration and Assistance Tool.
 - Remote Mutual Aid was provided to evacuees from the Parker Lake fire (Ft. Nelson) and Dogtooth fire (Golden).

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SPU Program and Deployments

The CSRD has a total of four Type 2 SPU trailers and all of them were deployed this past summer to sites that include:

- Dasniers Bay in the Seymour Arm area
- Alpha Creek Nakusp area
- Dog Tooth Golden area south
- Hullcar Mtn, Silver Creek
- Shetland Creek, Ashcroft
- Slocan Complex
- Trout Lake/Slocan Complex

The SEP EOC monitored local fires and strategically placed trailers in Revelstoke, Sicamous and then Golden throughout the fire season. While we had provincial deployments, we always had at least one trailer in the Shuswap and one in the Columbia and as conditions changed so did the trailer locations.

The SPU trailer storage and maintenance building construction project has an estimated completion date of mid-December when all trailers and equipment spares will be moved from their current locations and into the new building.

SPU equipment reconciliation after the 2024 wildfire season is still in progress with the BCWS as they get all the equipment back from the field and verify what belongs to other local governments. Any non-consumable SPU equipment that is still missing or damaged will then be replaced and the province will be invoiced for eligible costs.

Spring 2025 SPU training dates have been set.

Communications

Communications is a critical component of managing emergencies, and this was no different in 2024. While the summer season of 2024 was much milder than 2023, we applied lessons learned to enhance emergency communications for the Hullcar Mountain fire. Communications staff also assisted both the Golden and Area Emergency Program and the Revelstoke and Area Emergency Programs with public information for fires in Electoral Areas A and B.

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New and Noteworthy:

- Conducted training on the Alertable System for 16 users within the SEP, GAEMP and RAEMP programs to enhance capacity.
- Successfully use of the Alertable system after working with them to rectify mapping issues with their product in 2023. The Alertable system now has 35,794 subscribers across the CSRD.
- Employed the use of a satellite public information station at the Silver Creek Community Hall staffed by Electoral Area D Director Dean Trumbley and CAO John MacLean to assist communications efforts to residents. This was very successful and will be incorporated into the SEP's emergency communications plans going forward.
- Effective multi-agency collaboration with SEP and the District of Sicamous to ensure prompt and timely information-sharing on a fatal crash at the Bruhn Bridge in Sicamous.
- Plans in place for a 3.5-hour training session on crisis communications for elected officials (CSRD, District of Sicamous and City of Revelstoke) and a 3.5-hour effective media and messaging training for staff (CSRD, City of Salmon Arm, District of Sicamous and City of Revelstoke) on November 14, 2024. This was a requested item in the Bush Creek East Elected Officials After Action Review.
- BCWS is requesting all SEP information bulletins limit firefighting information to a general statement directing residents to the BCWS information dashboard. It is BCWS' determination that all operational firefighting information is their jurisdiction. They do not want this information sourced or republished in Shuswap Emergency Program updates. In previous wildfire seasons, there have been efforts within SEP to determine best practices when communicating wildfire information to the public. Preseason meetings with the BCWS will be held to ensure a common understanding of the communication protocol.

Geohazards

Monitoring by BGC stopped for the Wiseman Creek area in the Spring of 2024 when EMCR denied SEP's request for funding.

The focus shifted to the Bush Creek East Post Wildfire Hazards identified in recent reports. The province contracted Stantec Engineering Ltd. to test their Slope Manager system to warn of forecasted geohazard risk based on rainfall. This pilot project is still in progress. The CSRD has some concerns with the liability of using this system placed on local

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governments, and the lack of clear recommendations from Stantec regarding the need to evacuate areas identified by the Slope Manager system.

All other post-wildfire hazard areas that have been identified in recent reports (Hullcar Road wildfire, Mara Mountain wildfire) are mainly a risk to water license holders (water intakes).

The risk from erosion on Newsome Creek has not been resolved due to lack of available grant funding appropriate for the required scope of the project. Discussion with the province is ongoing to find a suitable solution.

EDMA (Emergency and Disaster Management Act)

The act came into force November 8, 2023. Work on the regulations to support the new legislation is ongoing through consultation and cooperation with First Nations, and by engagement with other ministries, local governments, critical infrastructure owners, public sector agencies, emergency management practitioners and the public.

Some areas of focus for local governments in the first year include:

- Indigenous Engagement Requirements (Consult and cooperate)
- State of Local Emergency (SOLE) term expanded from 7 to 14 days with option to extend
- Authority to declare Recovery Periods for up to 90 days (for access to additional powers)
- Updated planning and risk assessment requirements
- Post event reporting requirements

The province anticipates some updated regulations for local authority emergency management, and post-emergency financial assistance in 2025. The compliance and enforcement framework is targeted for 2026, however additional time will be provided to regulated entities to meet new emergency management planning requirements.

A five-year review of the new ACT is planned for initiation before November 8, 2028.

Indigenous Engagement

The Emergency and Disaster Management Act includes Indigenous engagement requirements that promote relationship building across jurisdictions and the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and cultural safety across emergency management practices.

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Regulated entities are required to consult and co-operate with Indigenous governing bodies through all phases of emergency management. The Province has made funding available to regulatory entities to support implementing Indigenous engagement.

The CSRD, City of Salmon Arm, District of Sicamous, City of Revelstoke and the Town of Golden combined funding and through a Request for Proposal process have engaged Colliers Project Leaders as the consultant for this Indigenous Engagement Project (IEP). IEP is guided by the following three principles:

- Acknowledge and respect the authority of each party.
- Work towards harmonization and coordination of emergency measures, plans, policies and programs.
- Foster collaborative approaches to matters of mutual interest.

To date, the IEP has completed three of the five phases: Project Initiation, Project Engagement Plan and Development and most recently, Engagement Workshop held on October 16 and 17. The final two phases will consist of formalizing partnerships and a path forward and final reporting with a target completion date of March 2025.

EM TRAINING

The after-action review highlighted several key areas for improvement including the recommendation of developing a structured regional training program. A training plan was quickly developed and implemented for the remainder of 2024 using UBCM's Community Emergency Preparedness Funding. Six customized training sessions were offered to the City of Salmon Arm, District of Sicamous and CSRD staff with 115 seats filled completing 780 hours.

Training was "capped off" with a facilitated tabletop exercise held October 29. Thirty-nine staff attended Exercise Capstone and were provided with the opportunity to put their training into practice. In addition, attendees provided input into the development of customized checklists and workflow charts for each of the EOC functions. A final report will be provided by the facilitators providing SEP with an outline of recommended training to be included in the 2025 Training Program.

ESS

Continual improvements and updates to the delivery of Emergency Support Services have kept the Shuswap ESS Team very busy in 2024. The addition of the BC Services Card App

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provides evacuees with the ability to receive support via Interac e-Transfer (money directly deposited into their bank account). ESS services can now be provided remotely and allow evacuees the flexibility of deciding which supplies best meets their needs. In addition, a Shelter Allowance was introduced in June supporting evacuees with a set allowance (\$200 per night for a family of 1-5) that can be used to offset costs for accommodation the evacuee chooses (billeting, camping, B&B, etc.) alleviating the pressure on commercial accommodation providers. Further expansion of access pathways has recently been created and briefly tested this year. New pathways include online self-service where evacuees can complete their own needs assessments and receive support without visiting a Reception Centre. An Evacuee Helpline can also be activated in large events. The Helpline provides basic information about ESS and emergency events to support the public.

The Shuswap ESS Team has provided the following support in 2024:

- Continued to provide ESS support until the end of February to vulnerable population who lost their homes in the Bush Creek East Wildfire.
- 4 Level 1 Responses – including the Malakwa fire where 3 mobile homes were lost.
- Remote Mutual Aid supporting evacuees from Fort Nelson.
- Remote Mutual Aid supporting evacuees from the Dogtooth Wildfire.
- Activated a Reception Centre for 8 days supporting evacuees from the Hullcar Mountain Wildfire.

NEPs

SEP continues to support over 50 Neighbourhood Emergency Programs in our coverage area. During the Bush Creek East Wildfire, SEP worked closely with the NEP Coordinators in the Adams Lake East area. This was extremely helpful as this community was evacuated via ferry twice during this event. Another NEP Team that was extremely helpful during this wildfire was the Seymour Arm NEP. Hundreds of families were forced to evacuate at night using the Seymour Arm FSR and were housed and fed by members of the Seymour Arm NEP.

Two new NEPs are being developed in the Salmon Arm area - Mount Ida Vista and Heronview and NEP meetings have been held in the Malakwa and Blind Bay areas.

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Evacuation Planning

Further funding through UBCM's Community Emergency Preparedness Fund has allowed SEP to continue Evacuation Route Planning for 10 additional high-risk communities within our coverage area. Red Dragon Consulting has completed draft versions of the one-page Toolkit and Guidance Documents which has been provided to the CSRD's GIS department for mapping and final steps of the planning process. The content of each Guidance Document will include anticipated speed of progression to provide trigger criteria for evacuation decision making, physical evacuation route planning modelling data, evacuation route alternatives, decision making timeline for each community based on real time, method and modes of evacuation, assembly points, traffic and security locations and resources required for route management, pinch points and more. A one-page quick reference guide will also be produced outlining evacuation route priorities, issues and resources. These documents are specifically designed for use by the Emergency Operations Centre. The following is a list of high-risk communities that have been completed to-date:

Evacuation Planning Areas Included in the 2020/2021 Project	
▪ Anglemont	▪ Malakwa
▪ Blind Bay	▪ Scotch Creek
▪ Eagle Bay	▪ Sorrento
▪ Falkland	▪ Sunnybrae
▪ Lee Creek	▪ Swansea Point
Evacuation Planning Areas Included in the 2023/2024 Project	
▪ Celistia	▪ Dorian Bay
▪ White Lake/Little White Lake	▪ Tappen
▪ Silver Creek	▪ Notch Hill
▪ Rancho/Deep Creek	▪ Annis Bay
▪ Cambie Solsqua	▪ Queest/Anstey

Red Dragon will also be providing Community Evacuation Plans for distribution to residents. Community Plans will include sections on Evacuation Stages and Process, Emergency Support Services and how to access assistance at a Reception Centre, where to turn for accurate information, community evacuation zones, potential routes and assembly points and what every family can do to prepare should they be evacuated.

SEP Preliminary Budget 2025

The preliminary SEP budget plan does not include much change from the previous year. There is a plan to purchase four new Mark 3 fire pumps, with a current estimated cost of

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\$10,000 each or \$40,000 total, with funds from the 2024 SPU provincial deployment reserves. This purchase is necessary to start the gradual replacement of the oldest pumps in the trailers that have been amortized since 2012 and are unlikely to remain operational for much longer.

Next meeting April 8, 2025

Future SEP Executive meetings have been set for the second Tuesday in April and third Tuesday in October each year.