



SHUSWAP EMERGENCY PROGRAM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

- TO:** Chair and Committee Members
- SUBJECT:** Emergency Support Services
- DESCRIPTION:** Report from Cathy Semchuk, Emergency Program Coordinator/ESS Director, dated March 23, 2026. Report provides an update on the Shuswap Emergency Support Service Program.
- RECOMMENDATION:** THAT: the SEP Executive Committee receive this update.

BACKGROUND:

The Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA) outlines the framework for modernizing emergency management including the requirement for local authorities to deliver Emergency Support Services (ESS) to residents affected by disasters.

This report provides an update on how the Shuswap ESS Team is leveraging digital tools, such as the Evacuee Registration and Assistance (ERA) tool to provide faster, automated support including Interac e-Transfers, virtual registrations and digital needs assessment while still maintaining a compassionate “people-centered” approach that blends technology with human connection.

UPDATE:

The province continues to modernize how ESS is provided and ESS Teams are experiencing constant changes and the need for more inclusive, community-led approaches. The Shuswap ESS Team is adapting and flourishing by adopting these digital tools, embracing technology and becoming an exemplary team throughout the province.

New service pathways include:

- Digital registration through ERA where the evacuee can create a profile before an emergency occurs speeding up the needs assessment process.
- ERA also supports virtual service delivery, which minimizes in-person visits shortening line-ups at our busy reception centres.
- Eligible evacuees with BC Services Card App can receive financial support via e-Transfer directly into their bank account replacing paper referrals, reducing and sometimes eliminating wait times, providing flexibility and allowing evacuees to choose how best to meet their basic needs.
- The evacuee now has the option to choose a Direct Accommodation Allowance instead of a hotel referral. The Allowance gives the evacuee the ability to choose their own accommodation providing more options such as billeting with family and friends, Bed and Breakfasts and Airbnbs. This relieves the pressure on securing commercial accommodations during peak tourist seasons.
- Community-Led Learning provides training materials designed for local ESS teams to deliver training within their own communities.

Presently the Shuswap ESS Team consists of over 70 volunteers, with 46 fully trained in the use of ERA. Our Team is also developing procedures and protocols on the delivery of virtual supports for both local and province-wide events. Five Shuswap members have become instructors for Community-Led Learning offering certified training locally and to neighbouring teams such as Golden and Area Emergency Program, Revelstoke and Area Emergency Program, Neskonlith First Nations, Adams Lake

First Nations, Splitsin First Nations, Spallumcheen, Chase, Vernon, RDNO and local Red Cross volunteers.

Our Team is also very proud to be the first team in the province to offer BC Service Card App clinics to seniors within our coverage area. Clinics educate seniors on the benefits of the BC Service Card App used to securely access over 25 government services, including Evacuee Registration and Assistance. During the clinic, volunteers personally walk individuals through downloading, authentication and the steps outlined in our brochure to set up their Profile and become e-transfer eligible.



Clinics have been held in Sorrento, North Shuswap, Salmon Arm and our team is presently organizing a clinic in Sicamous at the Sicamous Seniors Centre to be held during their weekly luncheon.

Our Team was excited to receive approval of their UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness grant application. This funding will cover costs to support 19 volunteers to attend the Network of Emergency Support Services Teams conference held this year in Kamloops. This three-day conference provides the opportunity for our volunteers to train, exercise and network with other volunteers throughout the province.

Most importantly, this funding enables the Columbia Shuswap Regional District to host a regional exercise that includes participation from our sister programs, Revelstoke and Area Emergency Program and Golden and Area Emergency Program, our First Nations partners, and surrounding ESS Teams. This collaborative exercise helps to promote knowledge sharing, start discussions on mutual aid and help build capacity through networking.

The Shuswap Team conducted 8 Level 1 single-home responses from October 2025 to-date. Many of these fires were complex situations where volunteers are dealing with seniors on fixed incomes, with no insurance, and facing a total loss of their home and belongings.

Members have contributed an estimated 1500 volunteer hours last year attending meetings, trainings, conferences and exercises.

NEXT STEPS:

SEP will continue to support the Shuswap ESS volunteers.

Report Approval Details

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This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



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