

Wildfires and First Nations
Communities in British Columbia

Frequently Asked Questions

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Introduction

This document was developed as a reference guide for questions asked by First Nations leadership during the 2021 All Chiefs Town Hall meeting series from July – September, 2021. It also includes updated responses to questions first asked during the 2017 and 2018 wildfires.

This document is provided as a reference guide only. For information pertaining to your community's situation in an emergency situation, please seek guidance from the relevant agency.

Thank you to the various provincial ministries and agencies who have contributed to developing this guide. As well, we would like to thank our partners in presenting the Town Hall meeting series – The First Nations Leadership Council and Emergency Management BC.

Note: This document is a work in progress. Input is still being gathered from our partners so more questions and answers will be added to this document.

1. How do I get information about the status of fires in my area?

- For current information on fire danger ratings, regional fire prohibitions and wildfire activity call 1-888-336-7378 (3FOREST).
- For emergency response support due to an emergency event, contact Emergency Management BC's 24/7 Emergency Coordination Centre at 1-800-663-3456.
- Follow [@EmergencyInfoBC](#) on Twitter or visit their [website](#) for information on evacuation alerts/orders and status updates regarding emergency events.
- Report wildfire sightings or the presence of smoke to BC's Wildfire Management Branch at 1-800-663-5555 or *5555 on most cellular phones.
- Keep up-to-date on the provincial wildfire situation by visiting the [BC Wildfire Service website](#) or viewing the [BC Wildfire Service Dashboard](#).
- You can add a layer to the map that shows the location of all First Nations by clicking on the layers icon and selecting *British Columbia Indian Reserves and Band Names*.
- You can find contact information for each of the six Emergency Management BC regions on their [website](#).

2. What's an Emergency Management BC Task Number and why do I need one?

An Emergency Management BC Task Number is a control number used to track approved emergency responses related to a specific event or training activities for which provincial reimbursement and/or workers' compensation and liability coverage is requested.

Communities experiencing emergencies should contact Emergency Management BC's Emergency Coordination Centre, which operates 24/7 at 1-800-663-3456, to request support and be assigned a task number used to track emergency incidents by jurisdiction.

Whether or not a task number has been issued, communities can contact Indigenous Services Canada regarding emergency supports at bcaandc.do@isc.gc.ca.

3. What is Emergency Management BC's role?

Emergency Management BC is the lead for coordinating emergency response activities and maintaining 24/7 emergency coordination services.

Through the joint Emergency Management Agreement with the Province of British Columbia, Indigenous Services Canada works collaboratively with Emergency Management BC to ensure First Nations are fully integrated into the Province of British Columbia's emergency management structure to receive equivalent emergency management services as those provided to other British Columbia residents.

4. What is BC Wildfire Service's role?

The BC Wildfire Service leads wildfire suppression efforts across the province.

Through the joint Wildfire Response Agreement with the Province of British Columbia, Indigenous Services Canada works collaboratively with the BC Wildfire Service to ensure First Nations communities are provided equivalent fire suppression services as other British Columbia communities.

5. What is Indigenous Services Canada's Role?

Through the Emergency Management Assistance Program, Indigenous Services Canada works with First Nations and provincial partners to support communities on reserve to access emergency assistance services.

Indigenous Services Canada provides funding to First Nations so they can build resiliency, prepare for natural hazards and respond to them using the four pillars of emergency management (Prevention and Mitigation; Preparedness; Response; and, Recovery). Indigenous Services Canada will:

- collaborate with First Nations to identify and support eligible response and recovery activities;
- identify and communicate issues raised by First Nations to provincial partners, such as Emergency Management BC;
- provide up-to-date information to senior officials, including the Minister's office regarding the well-being of BC First Nations;
- work directly with communities to provide immediate funding to address urgent needs such as loss of power; and
- work with First Nations recovering from natural hazards and emergency events.

6. What is the First Nations Health Authority's Role?

The First Nations Health Authority responds to emergencies that may impact the health and wellness of First Nations in BC through collaboration with First Nations communities, and various federal, provincial, regional and non-governmental health organizations. The First Nations Health Authority Health Emergency Management branch ensures that First Nations communities are effectively incorporated into emergency preparedness, prevention, response and recovery activities.

For a complete description of supports, see Health Emergency Management in the [First Nations Health Authority Programs and Services Guide](#).

Wildfire Response

7. Who do I contact if I have equipment available that might be useful for fire-fighting or fire-mitigation?

Please contact the BC Wildfire Service at 1-800-663-5555. BC Wildfire Service can explain their specific procedures for registering equipment that might be used during the wildfire season. While community help is always appreciated, in some cases, equipment may not be used.

8. Who is entitled to Emergency Support Services?

The Province of British Columbia's Emergency Support Services assistance program is available to help individuals or families forced from their homes because of an emergency or disaster. Emergency Support Services is intended to meet the immediate basic needs of evacuees including food, lodging, clothing, transportation and incidentals and is available to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people both on or off reserve.

Additionally, under the Emergency Management Assistance Program, Indigenous Services Canada can provide additional supports to First Nations communities of evacuated members in areas such as accommodations, meals and incidental rates. Indigenous Services Canada will work with community leadership to identify the need for additional community and membership supports and provide funding. If your community has urgent needs related to an emergency event, please call the Indigenous Services Canada Duty Officer at bcaandc.do@isc.gc.ca.

9. Do I have to go in person to get Emergency Support Services?

If you have been evacuated from your community due to wildfires, you should register with Emergency Support Services whether you need the support or not.

Self-register online at ess.gov.bc.ca. If you require assistance with self-registration, you can ask for help by calling Emergency Support Services at 1-800-585-9559.

Proceed to the nearest Reception Centre to complete the Emergency Support Services registration. You will also be asked to complete a needs assessment to determine what short-term supports you require (e.g. food, lodging, clothing and incidentals).

For more information on evacuation order and alerts, visit the [First Nations Emergency Services Society website](#).

10. Is there any provincial financial support available for First Nations communities outside the fire zone who are providing shelter to affected communities?

First Nations have acknowledged the importance of the compassionate support they received from other First Nations communities during previous wildfire seasons.

If your First Nation is interested in becoming a host community, please contact Emergency Management BC at 1-800-663-3456 for information on how you can receive support.

11. How does the BC Wildfire Service prioritize which wildfires to fight?

In determining how to prioritize which wildfires to fight, BC Wildfire Service considers the following priorities:

1. **Safety of human life**
2. **Telecommunications:** often, the safety of individuals in an emergency depends on protecting infrastructure such as working phone lines so individuals can call for help.
3. **Critical infrastructure:** refers to processes, systems, facilities, technologies, networks, assets and services essential to the health, safety, security or economic well-being of Canadians and the effective functioning of government. Disruptions of critical infrastructure could result in catastrophic loss of life, adverse economic effects and significant harm to public confidence. This can include essential roadways/bridges for evacuations, safe drinking water, communication/phone networks, firefighting and essential government services, etc.

These pieces of critical infrastructure become priorities for firefighting crews when it becomes apparent that not protecting them puts the public's safety at risk.

This may mean that, in some circumstances, this critical infrastructure must be prioritized ahead of other structures in any community.

12. Where can I find help with my medical needs if I'm evacuated?

In an emergency evacuation situation, access to medications, health equipment and supplies, or access to your regular health services may not be readily available.

[First Nations Health Benefits](#) can assist with:

- Refilling prescriptions
- Patient travel unrelated to the evacuation order, including travel to dialysis and other appointments
- Medical supplies and equipment, including oxygen tanks and eyewear
- Dental items
- Mental health and wellness counselling

Please call the First Nations Health Benefits line at 1-855-550-5454, between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday. On weekends and statutory holidays, support is available at 1-888-305-1505, from 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day:

Doctors are available seven days a week from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm to provide medical advice, prescriptions and referrals via Zoom video conference or phone. The service is culturally safe and open to all Indigenous people in BC and their family members. Call 1-855-344-3800 for an appointment.

First Nations Virtual Substance Use & Psychiatry Service:

This service requires a referral from a health and wellness provider, such as a doctor, nurse, mental health counsellor or traditional healer or the First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day. Specialists in addictions medicine and psychiatry are available weekdays to support individuals and family members with more complex mental health and addiction needs.

13. Are counselling services available to evacuees?

The First Nations Health Authority coordinates confidential, culturally-safe supports 24/7 through:

- KUU-US Indigenous Crisis line at: 1-800-588-8717
- Indian Residential School Survivors Society at: 1-800-721-0066
- Tsow-Tun-Le-Lum at: 1-888-403-3123

You may be eligible for mental health coverage through the First Nations Health Benefits program. This includes coverage for one-on-one counselling with a counsellor

found on the Health Benefits [mental health provider list](#) (pdf). Services can be in-person or virtual. For more information, call 1-855-550-5454 or visit www.fnha.ca/benefits/mental-health.

14. What if there are concerns regarding air quality in my community?

Air quality due to wildfire smoke in some communities may be a concern. As such, the First Nations Health Authority Environmental Health Officers are available to work with impacted communities to support setting up cleaner air spaces.

The First Nations Health Authority has a limited number of air purifiers for community members that have additional vulnerabilities to wildfire smoke and meet the program criteria for the 2021 wildfire season. Health leadership in your community should contact your Environmental Health Officer to request an air purifier. Community reimbursement for air purifiers for vulnerable community members may be eligible. Email HEM@fnha.ca for eligibility requirements.

In some circumstances, masks can reduce the impacts of wildfire smoke on health. The First Nations Health Authority Environmental Health team can provide guidance on the [most effective types of masks](#), and the limitations of this intervention.

15. Can we use sprinkler systems on roofs to try to protect our homes from wildfires?

Exterior sprinkler systems may be used to wet the home and/or surrounding area to minimize the possibility of fire ignition; however, there are limitations and risks to using sprinkler systems. Community water systems are sized to provide water for drinking, cooking and bathing purposes with limited use for lawn watering; they are not sized to provide adequate water capacity for large scale irrigation or fighting wildfires.

With the use of roof sprinklers, the water system would likely run out of water which would then mean there would be no water available for other purposes. As an alternative to using a community water system, the community could use another source, such as a surface water body. Another limitation is that water from the roof sprinklers could enter the house and cause water damage. This type of damage would not be eligible for a funding reimbursement.

For more information, please refer to BC FireSmart's (a branch of FireSmart Canada) [FireSmart Fact Sheet](#).

16. What is the Emergency Management Assistance Program?

Indigenous Services Canada's [Emergency Management Assistance Program](#) reimburses provinces and territories, First Nations and third-party emergency management providers eligible response and recovery costs, including evacuation and damage to primary residence costs, for First Nation communities. The program also aims to meet the unique needs of First Nation communities following an emergency event.

Under the Emergency Management Assistance Program, the Building Back Better guide is a recovery framework that centers on supporting the restoration of communities and assets in a manner that achieves two goals:

- Reduces the vulnerability of First Nation communities to disasters; and
- Strengthens the First Nations' community resilience

Examples of eligible response-related activities include:

- **Response Assistance:** supports available to First Nation communities to respond to imminent or occurring emergency events
- **Emergency Social Supports:** short-term social supports to ensure the health, safety and cultural well-being of evacuees
- **Temporary Displacement Assistance:** supports for individuals who remain evacuated for more than 60 days
- **Search and Recovery:** supports efforts to recover an individual (or individuals) when the first response effort is not successful and the well-being of the community remains at risk due to the increased levels of stress.
- **Emergency Transportation and Repatriation Assistance:** supports available to First Nation communities for emergency transportation and repatriation-related expenses

Examples of eligible **recovery** related activities include:

- **Recovery Assistance:** eligibility for First Nations partners to receive assistance under the Emergency Management Assistance Program
- **Mitigation Measures:** guidance on structural design enhancements to buildings on-reserve to support physical resiliency and protection against future emergency events
- **Personal Losses:** support community individuals in the recovery of their personal property losses post-emergency event

For more information about the Emergency Management Assistance Program or accessing funding supports through Indigenous Services Canada related to an emergency event, please contact the Indigenous Services Canada Duty Officer at bcaandc.do@isc.gc.ca.

17. Will the federal government help pay for damaged or destroyed homes in First Nations communities to be rebuilt?

Yes. The Government of Canada has programs in place that will provide assistance to on reserve First Nations communities who have been affected by emergency events.

After the immediate danger and response is over, Indigenous Services Canada will work with on-reserve communities and the province to support the development of recovery plans by First Nations. Resources will be available to undertake the recovery work including any necessary capacity to develop the recovery plan.

All the impacts to the community should be detailed in the recovery plan; including everything that needs rebuilding or remediation. Recovery plans should also identify areas of insurance coverage.

18. Who is responsible for putting together the recovery response plans?

The affected First Nation is responsible for developing their recovery plans and associated claims. Indigenous Services Canada and Emergency Management BC will work with the First Nation and provide support and guidance.

A First Nation community may be eligible to establish a [Community Recovery position](#) to support rebuilding efforts including developing a recovery plan. If a recovery plan is not required, Indigenous Services Canada and Emergency Management BC will work with First Nations to support recovery needs. For more information, please contact Indigenous Services Canada at bcaandc.do@isc.gc.ca and Emergency Management BC at 1-800-663-3456.

19. What about vehicles?

The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia has a [streamlined process](#) set up to help customers affected by the wildfires to file claims for vehicles which had insurance and to replace identification paperwork. To report a claim, please call 1-800-910-4222.

For questions about the eligibility of replacement or repair of vehicles damaged by wildfires on reserve, contact the Indigenous Services Canada Duty Officer at bcaandc.do@isc.gc.ca.

20. How can evacuees obtain replacement Status cards?

Indigenous Services Canada has mobile status card issuance teams that can travel to evacuation areas upon request. To make arrangements, please contact the Indigenous Services Canada Duty Officer at bcaandc.do@isc.gc.ca. Individuals can also write to infopubs@isc.gc.ca to request a Temporary Confirmation of Registration Document (TCRD) by mail – use “BC Wildfire TCRD” in the subject line.

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21. Is there a First Nations organization supporting emergency management knowledge sharing and community-to-community learning? This may include common issues, sharing best practices, transferring knowledge and improved communication for First Nations leadership, staff and advisors.

Emergency Management BC is working towards a "Common Operating Picture" which will include a single window for information sharing. The Tripartite Working Group, including the First Nations Leadership Council, Emergency Management BC, Indigenous Services Canada, First Nation representatives and First Nation emergency management professionals, developed a work plan to support the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on Emergency Management for First Nations communities.

On October 20-21, 2021, the First Nations Leadership Council will host an Emergency Management Forum to discuss national and regional emergency management strategies with other emergency management professionals and with experts in the field. You can register for the virtual event through the First Nations Public Service Secretariat [website](#).

As well, the First Nations Emergency Services Society is leading an initiative to support First Nations communities with a user-friendly tool, called Lightship, that supports First Nations wildfire and emergency management business needs. This tool allows for First Nations to have ownership and control over their respective data. In addition, the First Nations Emergency Services Society will implement a community of practice for First Nations in the use of the user friendly tool.

22. Is there a way for the provincial "Common Operating Picture" to be more useable for First Nations? The Geographic Information System can be shared for operational needs, and may be helpful towards common situation awareness and communications.

The British Columbia Emergency Management "Common Operating Picture" is a robust system aimed to assist in creating resiliency in the province.

The "Common Operating Picture" is accessible to all provincial agencies and external Emergency Management BC partner agencies that include First Nations, local authorities, critical infrastructure owners, federal departments and non-governmental organizations.

If you need the login information, or have forgotten the username and password, please contact your [Regional Emergency Management BC office](#).

23. Are supports available for communities facing capacity challenges to implement volunteer-based Emergency Management BC Programs (for example, Emergency Support Services and First Responder)?

Emergency Management BC, the BC Wildfire Service, and Indigenous Services Canada are working in partnership with the First Nations Emergency Services Society to support the 'Indigenous TEAMS program'. Through this program, the First Nations Emergency Services Society has built a roster of Indigenous emergency managers who could be deployed to Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centres to support First Nations who require assistance.

Emergency Management BC can also financially reimburse First Nations who would like to bring in their own surge capacity to support their emergency operations centers through Policy 5.11. For more information, please contact Bob Mills, Emergency Management Manager, FNESS, at 250-457-1694 or bmills@fness.bc.ca.

With pre-approval from the local Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centres, Emergency Management BC can also financially reimburse First Nations who would like to bring in their own staff capacity to support emergency operations centers.

First Nations Emergency Operations Centers and Emergency Support Services teams can also submit a resource request to Emergency Management BC's Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centres for additional personnel support. Emergency Management BC will then make all efforts to find personnel who could assist.

24. Does a working group exist for providing feedback as to the "Common Operating Picture"? There are concerns that more information could be included in the tool.

Emergency Management BC is working with First Nations for the ongoing improvement of resources to support materials being accessible, useful, and current. While there is no current working group, feedback may be provided to Gurdeep.Singh@gov.bc.ca and Ben.Arril@gov.bc.ca from GEOBC.

25. For smaller First Nations communities, are there ways to blend funding positions? For example, emergency response coordinator, occupational safety and health, First Responder, and emergency medical transportation (if there is no ambulance service available)?

Generally, these positions and programs would be funded through different organizations. However, Canada, British Columbia, and the First Nations Health Authority are committed to working together to find supports that meet community needs. First Nations are encouraged to present Indigenous Services Canada with a specific need or proposal, which could then be addressed accordingly based on the request. Please contact Indigenous Services Canada at bcaandc.do@isc.gc.ca.

Q&A – Indigenous Services Canada Town Hall for Chiefs on Wildfires – July 30, 2021

26. Will the back country in the interior where wildfires are present be closed to visitors and industry?

Any decisions to implement a backcountry restriction are not made lightly. At all times, public safety is the BC Wildfire Service's top priority. The public also has an important role to play when it comes to reporting new wildfires in the backcountry.

Risks to the public are evaluated daily by the BC Wildfire Service's fire management experts, using a combination of weather forecasts, fire danger ratings, fuel moisture conditions, fire growth modelling, observed and forecast fire behaviour on local fires, and regional and provincial fire loads

BC Wildfire Service works in partnership with industry; having industry equipment placed throughout the province allows faster response to new incidents and access to important pieces of heavy equipment.

Due to the ongoing and changing wildfire activity in BC, the backcountry restrictions and fire bans are changing as needed. As the [BC Wildfire Service](#) website states "Fire bans and restrictions are implemented as local fire hazards or dangers, weather conditions and fire activity demand, to help to protect the population of, and property and values in, British Columbia." All updated restrictions are found on the [Fire Bans and Restrictions](#) website.

27. Are there plans to harness local knowledge of the land for firefighting? Is there a way for communities to get in touch with BC Wildfire Service to do so?

BC Wildfire Service acknowledges that locally-trained crews are essential to fighting wildfires. The Kamloops Fire Centre is working to integrate local knowledge for firefighting through First Nations Liaisons. These liaisons support their communities by sharing valuable information with BC Wildfire Service Incident Management Teams about sensitive cultural/archaeological sites, protection of values, and offering key representatives who can attend operational planning meetings and host community meetings. First Nations communities can get in touch with BC Wildfire Service to provide valuable local knowledge by attending community meetings, contacting the First Nations Liaisons on each Incident Management Team and attending the Emergency Management BC coordination calls. BC Wildfire Service can be reached at FIREINFO@gov.bc.ca.

The First Nations Emergency Services Society is also leading initiatives to provide a wide range of training to First Nations communities on wildfire prevention and planning activities. The goal is to support the establishment of First Nations firefighting crews that can assist BC Wildfire Service during the wildfire season. After the wildfire season, crews will transition to completing fuel mitigation treatments within and around

the communities with fuel treatments, cultural and heritage burning that also reduces wildfire risk. As well, the First Nations Emergency Services Society is currently a liaison between BC First Nation community members and the BC Wildfire Service. They use their contacts to create a list of qualified and experienced First Nation individuals and share it with the BC Wildfire Service for recruitment purposes.

28. Is there a way to get Emergency Operations Center kits and training to First Nations who may be impacted by wildfires earlier to prepare staff ahead of time?

The First Nations Emergency Services Society provides Emergency Operations Center kits and training supports to First Nations. For more information, please contact their organization at 1-888-822-3388 or info@fness.bc.ca.

29. Can we use our domestic water supply systems to protect our homes from wildfires?

Water systems do not have enough storage capacity to allow for fighting wildfires. All water systems in Canada, whether small, medium or large, are designed to provide enough water for domestic, commercial/industrial use with limited outdoor watering. Most First Nations have small water supply systems that serve 500 people or less.

Some systems are designed to provide water to fight structural fires in houses and community buildings, and in these cases, a small water system has enough water to supply one fire truck for one hour. This is meant to extinguish a building fire and prevent it from spreading to nearby structures; however, the volume of water will typically not extinguish a wildfire. A fast responding fire department may prevent a house or grass fire from spreading or becoming a wildfire.

30. How does a water system work for providing water for firefighting?

Water systems generally consist of supply, treatment, and distribution piping including a reservoir and fire hydrants. Water from a well or surface water body goes to a pump house (typically part of a treatment plant) and then to the reservoir and distribution system. The reservoir is at a level high enough to create the pressure needed in the community. If there are fire hydrants (not all distribution systems have them), they are generally spaced within distances that are practical and convenient for the fire department to fight structural/house fires. The smallest systems may only have fire boxes containing hoses.

Extra water is stored in a reservoir to provide enough water for structural firefighting in small water systems. Often this accounts for well over half of the water in the reservoir. The remaining water allows for very high water flows in the morning and evening for domestic use. The amount of water stored for firefighting depends on the number and

size of the community buildings, as well as the fire department's capacity. The larger the buildings and fire department, the more water storage.

31. What about individual water systems?

Many communities have individuals with their own water supplies like small pressure tanks which can only hold small quantities of water. The home owner will know exactly how much water they can use both inside and outside during summer months.

DRAFT

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32. What is being done by BC Wildfire Service to improve communication with First Nations communities during emergency events?

BC Wildfire Service has hired multiple area and community liaisons to support their communities. Additionally, each incident and Fire Centre has an information team that supplies up to date fire information that is disseminated through multiple channels such as: community bulletins, community meetings, incident video briefings by the Incident Commander, [BC Wildfire Service website](#), [BC Wildfire Service Facebook page](#), [BC Wildfire Service twitter feed](#), BC Wildfire Service cell phone application, and email distribution to communities.

33. Has Emergency Management BC recommended the use of the Alert Ready system yet?

[Alert Ready](#) is a Canada-wide system that allows government officials in each province and territory to issue public safety alerts through major television and radio broadcasters, as well as compatible wireless devices. In British Columbia, the public alerting system is being used for tsunami notifications, AMBER alerts and policing incidents but not for wildfire events.

Emergency Management BC is revisiting the Alert Ready system, and hopes to engage with First Nations communities in the fall to determine the best mechanisms for alerts. As well, Emergency Management BC's tests of the alerting system were successful and raised public awareness about what to expect in the event of an actual emergency alert.

34. What compensation is there available for loss of cattle/livestock feed? Is there an evacuation response?

The [Livestock relocation](#) website provides information on provincial support for relocation, reimbursement, and compensation. The chart and other frequently asked questions are available online including for non-commercial farm business and pets.

The Ministry of Agriculture Food and Fisheries assists the local authorities and First Nations in providing producers with emergency support that can be broadly categorized into:

- Providing Premises identification information (i.e. location information of agricultural operations and associated livestock / poultry numbers)
- Coordinating and planning for emergency feed as needed
- Supporting the relocation of livestock
- Confirming the need for re-entry permits for ranchers and farmers in evacuated areas to care for their livestock or crops.

35. Does BC Wildfire Service connect with First Nations/community leadership directly?

Yes. Incident commanders and liaisons host community meetings with community leaders and have leaders attend operational planning meetings. Incident commanders and supporting staff also attend community meetings to speak to leadership. Area liaisons also engage multiple community leaders to discuss wildfire incidents that affect multiple communities at the same time.

36. What supports are available for understanding Expenditure Authorization Form requests? For example, understanding denials, reviewing submissions, etc.

The first point of contact is your Emergency Management BC regional office. The Emergency Operations Center Expenditure Authorization form is available online [here](#).

37. What is being done to support First Nations protecting back country lands? For example: patrol, safety equipment funding, road fixture, updated pumps/hoses.

Indigenous Services Canada offers a number of programs that could be utilized by communities, including the following:

- The **Emergency Management Assistant Program** allows for the purchase of low-value equipment for emergency preparedness and mitigation projects through the program's proposal-based funding streams: Non-Structural Mitigation and Preparedness and FireSmart.
- Indigenous Services Canada works with First Nations to **support on-reserve structural mitigation infrastructure projects** that protect First Nations communities housing and infrastructure from climate-related hazards. Projects include dikes, sea walls and erosion-control measures.
- Communities can also apply for funding through the **Capital Facilities and Maintenance Program** for projects related to community infrastructure. Projects need to be listed and prioritized on their community First Nations Infrastructure Investment Plan in order to be considered for funding. For questions, contact your Capital Management Officer at Indigenous Services Canada .

For more information, please contact the Indigenous Services Canada Duty Officer at bcaandc.do@isc.gc.ca.

38. Is there a list available for communities to know where to access different types of reimbursable supports? Evacuations occur so quickly it can be challenging to understand all available when a community suddenly faces one.

Indigenous Services Canada is working with First Nations Health Authority and Emergency Management BC towards compiling a list of supports for use by

communities. This would include, though would not be limited to, support for accessing the following.

- *Fire Protection Equipment* – Indigenous Services Canada's Community Infrastructure may provide wildfire and structural firefighting equipment. The First Nations Emergency Services Society would complete an assessment as well to check firefighting equipment.
- *Insurance* – Indigenous Services Canada, Emergency Management BC, First Nations Health Authority will work with communities through the recovery process to identify and fill gaps. The key concern is for recovery projects to be done as soon as possible.
- *Fuel Management* – First Nations Emergency Services Society recognizes the importance of fire smart and forest fuel management, as well as traditional burning to support fuel management.

For more information, please contact the Indigenous Services Canada Duty Officer at bcaandc.do@isc.gc.ca.

In addition, here are some helpful links when submitting for reimbursement of eligible expenses to partner organizations:

- **Emergency Management BC:**
 - [Financial Assistance for Emergency Response and Recovery Costs](#)
 - [Expenditure Authorization Form \(EAF\)](#)
- **First Nations Health Authority:**
 - [Environmental Health – Wildfires](#)
 - [Emergency Management Branch](#)
- **Indigenous Services Canada:**
 - [Emergency Management Assistance Program](#) supports response and recovery activities due to emergencies.
 - For more information, contact the Indigenous Services Canada Duty Officer at bcaandc.do@isc.gc.ca.

39. Does Indigenous Services Canada provide funding for backup power generators supporting water pumps?

Emergency Management BC is the primary supporter of generators in response to imminent threat/emergencies.

Indigenous Services Canada's Capital Program will provide funding support to First Nations to hire the services of an electrical contractor or the engineer who designed their water system to size an appropriate generator for their water system as well as to purchase and install a transfer switch so that the generator can plug into the water

system. Indigenous Services Canada will also provide funding for First Nations to rent an appropriately sized generator and have it put on standby at the rental shop so that it will be available to the community should they need it. There are separate monthly rates for a rental generator; one for when it's on standby and not being used and one for when it has operated.

Indigenous Services Canada has been working with the First Nations Emergency Services Society to source standby rental generators for this fire season for several communities. At this time, both rental generators and permanent installations are difficult to procure.

In general, Indigenous Services Canada doesn't provide funding for permanent standby generators unless a community experiences frequent and prolonged power outages where their water storage reservoir doesn't have adequate capacity for fire flow and community demand during their frequent, typical power outages. In the past, communities were provided with permanent back-up generators for their critical assets, but because power outages were infrequent and/or of short duration, the generators hardly ever ran and adequate maintenance was not performed on the generator so when there was a power outage of long duration, the generator would not turn on or work.

Contact your Capital Management Officer at Indigenous Services Canada, or email aadnc.projetsdimmobilisationscb-capitalprojectsbc.aandc@isc.gc.ca.

40. What flexibilities in regards to communication and reporting deadlines is Indigenous Services Canada offering for First Nations facing or under threat from wildfires?

In response to the unprecedented pressures and challenges First Nations are facing at this time due to wildfires, Indigenous Services Canada has alleviated any pressure First Nations may be feeling to meet reporting requirement deadlines set out in funding agreements. The safety and well-being of you and your community is Indigenous Services Canada's first priority. If you have questions, please contact your Funding Services Officer at 604-775-5100 or email the Indigenous Services Canada Duty Officer at bcaandc.do@isc.gc.ca.

In addition, Indigenous Services Canada has informed regional staff which communities are facing or are under evacuation orders to reduce non-urgent requests made to those communities unless the communities are reaching out for assistance.

The First Nations Emergency Services Society has also established an Emergency Management web portal to support communications with First Nations throughout BC. The portal can be accessed [here](#) that includes information regarding current evacuation alerts and orders for First Nations communities in BC and other helpful resources.

41. Is there a direct contact available for communities needing a fire safety assessment?

Indigenous Services Canada funds First Nations Emergency Services Society to conduct Fire Service Assessments. The purpose of the Fire Service Assessments is to assess the overall level of fire safety of a community and to provide options to enhance the level of fire protection. For more information or to request a Fire Service Assessment, contact Dean Colthorp, Fire Services Manager at 604-838-5711 or dcolphor@fnss.bc.ca.

42. Are Extreme Weather Plans shared with First Nations for feedback prior to railway implementation?

In the interest of safe railway operations and to address the concerns regarding risks to community safety in extreme weather conditions, Transport Canada issued a [Ministerial Order](#) to strengthen safety by further protecting against wildfires in the context of extreme weather conditions.

The Ministerial Order requires the railway companies to communicate their Interim Extreme Weather Fire Risk Mitigation Plan to municipal and other levels of local government, including Indigenous governments and other Indigenous governing bodies, and to establish a method for receiving comments for consideration. Railway companies must complete and implement a final Extreme Weather Fire Risk Mitigation Plan within 60 days following the issuance of the Order (Sept 9, 2021).

Further information on the railway companies plans are available at the following sites:

- <https://www.cpr.ca/en/interim-extreme-weather-fire-risk-mitigation-plan>
- <https://www.cn.ca/extremeweatherplan>

Key provisions of this Order, also include measures for railways to increase their capacity to detect, monitor and suppress fires. The immediate measures were developed on a precautionary basis, and includes targeted speed restrictions, increased equipment inspections, and staging and deployment of additional fire prevention equipment for more rapid response to any fire along the right of way. In the coming days and weeks, Transport Canada will continue to work with railway companies, communities and Indigenous Groups to further refine these measures based on the results of these consultations. For communities near Canadian Pacific Railway tracks, a letter has been sent encouraging review of the [Rail Safety Culture interim plan](#). For questions, please email questions@tc.gc.ca or call 604-666-0011.

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43. What measures are in place to ensure consistent federal government response to wildfires given the current election period?

The federal election was held on September 20, 2021. During this time, from when the election is called until the new Government is sworn in (also known as the caretaker or writ period), government operations will continue and public services will be delivered in a timely manner.

In the event of emergencies, such as natural disasters and the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government will take appropriate action to ensure that the public interest, notably the health, safety and security of Canadians, is preserved. As emergency management is critical for the health and safety of your communities, Indigenous Services Canada remains open to listening and responding to First Nations community's needs.

44. How can Indigenous peoples join the BC wildfire crews?

The BC Wildfire Service is working with the First Nations Emergency Services Society in moving forward with integrating their operations and looking at fire issues and solutions. For example, the BC Wildfire Service supports capacity development and fire expertise, as well as firefighting suppression exercises happening across the province.

As well, the BC Wildfire Service is focusing on improving Indigenous recruitment and retention and is engaging with communities and employment organizations to improve Indigenous recruitment and retention objectives. The organization has developed culturally sensitive recruitment practices, supports several joint training and recruitment initiatives (i.e. Cariboo Fire Centre and Tsihqot'in National Government).

The BC Wildfire Service is also a partner of the First Nations Forestry Council in its Indigenous Forestry Scholarship Program. Through this program, they fund eight scholarships and provide work placements and mentoring. BC Wildfire Service also funds and employs several youth from the Indigenous Youth Internship Program and participates in the First Nations Forestry Council mentorship research project.

Note: Answers to the questions raised in the rest of the town halls will be added to this document.