



Indian and Northern
Affairs Canada Affaires indiennes
et du Nord Canada



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT in BC First Nation Communities



Canada



There are 57 known hazards in British Columbia including floods, wildfires, landslides, earthquakes and extreme weather. One of these could impact your community at any time. Are you prepared for the worst?

This brochure provides information about how you, your family and your community can prepare for emergencies. It also describes the organizations that work with First Nation communities before, during and after emergencies, and the kinds of support they provide.

COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

Every community should have a plan outlining how the community will respond if there is an emergency. Emergency plans include information about:

- who is responsible for managing emergencies in your community
- potential hazards and risks that your community may face
- how information will be shared during an emergency

The plan should explain what to do if you need to evacuate and how your community will work with neighbouring communities during emergencies.

Emergency response in your community may be coordinated by Chief and Council or by a specific person assigned to that role, such as an Emergency Coordinator. The coordinator will work closely with other organizations, including Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), Emergency Management BC (EMBC), the First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS), and neighbouring communities to ensure that the community has the latest information on the emergency and that community members are kept safe.



The best emergency plan is one that is shared with community members and regularly practiced.

Having practices or drills will help fine-tune the plan and ensure that everyone knows what they should do during an emergency.

All First Nations in BC have developed some form of an emergency plan. If you would like to know more about the emergency plan for your community, contact your Chief and Council or your Emergency Coordinator.



PERSONAL PREPAREDNESS

If an emergency happens in your community, it may be a while before emergency workers are able to help. You should be prepared to take care of yourself and your family for a minimum of 72 hours. In addition, every able-bodied person is responsible for being ready to respond to an emergency and assisting others including children, the elderly and those who are ill, as appropriate.



Preparations can include everything from learning about the risks in your area to making plans and having emergency supplies on hand. Things to consider:

- how to safely exit your home and community
- have a supply of food and water for at least 72 hours
- prepare a list of your contacts who live close-by and out-of-town
- have health information and extra prescriptions ready to take with you if you have to evacuate
- know the location of your fire extinguisher, water valve, electrical box, gas valve and floor drain
- make plans to ensure your pets or livestock will be looked after

For more information on preparing yourself and your family, see the Provincial Emergency Program's *26 Weeks to Family Emergency Preparedness: A Guide for Actions to Take* (www.pep.bc.ca/hazard_preparedness/26_Weeks_2007.pdf)



Who works with First Nations communities during emergencies?

INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS CANADA

Although emergency management is a provincial/territorial responsibility, INAC is responsible for emergency management in First Nation communities. INAC has an agreement with the BC Government to ensure that BC First Nations communities receive the same emergency response and services as other communities in BC. The Province manages programs like Emergency Social Services and Disaster Financial Assistance and INAC covers eligible costs for First Nations.

INAC works closely with First Nation communities, the Province, FNESS and other partners to ensure the communities are supported and know where to seek assistance during emergencies. INAC has staff dedicated to working with First Nations during emergencies. A duty officer is available 24/7 to answer calls about emergencies and a team of INAC staff has been trained to work with the Province and other partners to support First Nation communities during emergencies.

FIRST NATIONS EMERGENCY SERVICES SOCIETY

The First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS) is funded by INAC to support First Nations in preparing for emergencies. FNESS assists First Nations with training and developing emergency plans. If you need assistance with your plan, contact FNESS (see back page for contact information). INAC may also authorize FNESS to go into communities during an emergency to support the First Nations with evacuations when an evacuation alert or order is required.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BC

Emergency Management BC (EMBC) is responsible for supporting local governments in emergency management. EMBC makes its resources available to support any BC community that is threatened by an emergency or disaster. EMBC works with local governments, including First Nations, to provide training and support before, during and after emergencies. EMBC is headquartered in Victoria and has six regional offices located in Surrey, Kamloops, Nelson, Terrace, Prince George and Victoria.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Local governments (e.g. municipalities and regional districts) work closely with neighbouring First Nation communities to integrate plans and response activities. Emergencies or disasters know no boundaries, so it is important to build these relationships in advance to make the best use of resources and improve public safety.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

There are many organizations that support First Nations before, during and after emergencies including federal and provincial governments and non-government organizations (NGOs). Different organizations may be called upon in each emergency situation depending on the expertise and resources required. For example, Health Canada may become involved if air or water quality needs to be assessed. When wildfires occur, the BC Wildfire Management Branch plays the central role in emergency response in the province. The Canadian Red Cross helps communities prevent and prepare for health emergencies. Other NGOs that may assist include the Salvation Army, the Mennonite Society and animal welfare organizations like the Canadian Disaster Animal Response Team and Noah's Wish.





What happens if you are evacuated?

EMERGENCY SOCIAL SERVICES

If the Local Government and/or Chief and Council issue an evacuation order for your community, you will have to leave. Emergency Social Services (ESS) assistance is available to support you and your families. Individuals who are unable to reach home as a consequence of an evacuation order may also be eligible for ESS.

ESS is intended to meet the immediate basic needs of evacuees including food, lodging, clothing, transportation and incidentals for 72 hours. If individuals or families require assistance beyond the ESS level of service, your community or Band Council will coordinate with agencies to provide assistance.

To register for ESS during an evacuation, you should go to the designated Emergency Social Services (ESS) Reception Centre. Your Chief and Council and Emergency Coordinator will know the location and this information is



usually included as part of an evacuation order document. Information may also be provided by local media, so listen to your local radio station.

Even if you do not require emergency social services, it is strongly advised that you still register so that your whereabouts are known. Friends and family members will want to know that you are safe and away from the disaster area.

For more information on Emergency Social Services,
visit www.ess.bc.ca/about.htm

For more information on reception centres,
visit www.ess.bc.ca/reception.htm

Emergency Planning, Tools and Information

FIRST NATIONS' EMERGENCY SERVICES SOCIETY

(604) 669-7305 or Toll Free 1 (888) 822-3388

www.fness.bc.ca

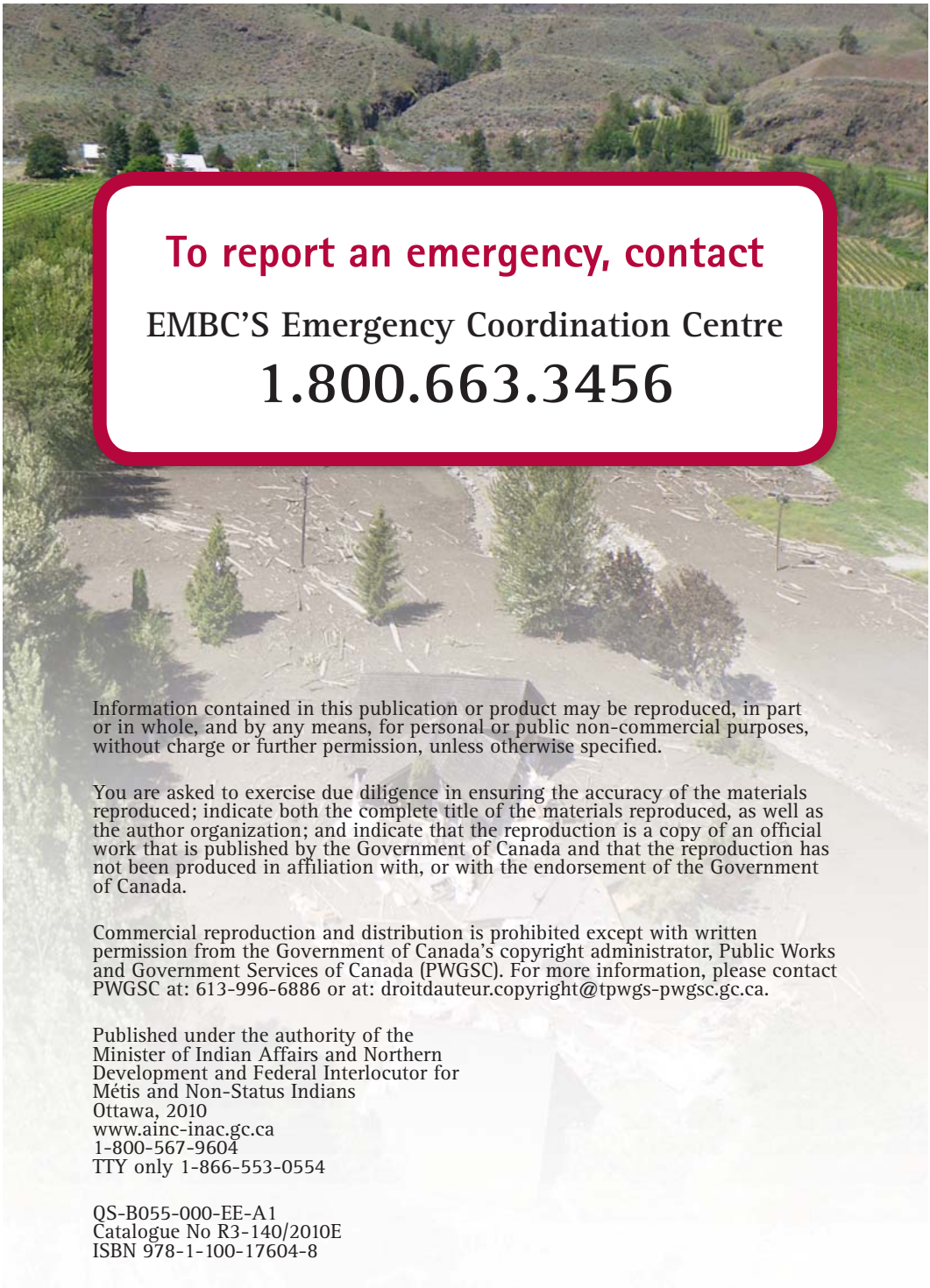
EMBC WEB SITE

www.pep.bc.ca

PUBLIC SAFETY CANADA WEB SITE

www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/em/index-eng.aspx





To report an emergency, contact
EMBC'S Emergency Coordination Centre
1.800.663.3456

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