

**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO**

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SELECT COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2014**

**5:00 PM – 6:00 PM**

**(RDN COMMITTEE ROOM)**

**A G E N D A**

**PAGES**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**DELEGATIONS**

**MINUTES**

- 2-3 Minutes of the regular Emergency Management Select Committee meeting held on January 24, 2014.

**BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**COMMUNICATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**REPORTS**

- 4-19 Overview of the Emergency Table Top Exercise Held April 25, 2014
- 20-21 Emergency Operations Center Notification and Activation System  
Emergency Program Update Power Point (Verbal)

**BUSINESS ARISING FROM DELEGATIONS OR COMMUNICATIONS**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Distribution: *M. Young (Chairperson); J. Stanhope; A. McPherson; H. Houle; G. Holme; J. Fell  
B. Veenhof; J. DeJong; P. Thorkelsson; G. Garbutt; T. Armet; J. Drew; J. Brand*

For Information Only: *M. Lefebvre; D. Willie; J. Ruttan; D. Brennan; D. Johnstone; B. Bestwick; J. Kipp;  
T. Greves; G. Anderson; T. Graff; J. Hill; M. O'Halloran*



**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO**

**MINUTES OF THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SELECT COMMITTEE  
MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2014 AT 1:30 PM  
IN THE RDN COMMITTEE ROOM**

**Present:**

Director M. Young	Chairperson
Director A. McPherson	Electoral Area A
Director H. Houle	Electoral Area B
Director G. Holme	Electoral Area E
Director J. Fell	Electoral Area F
Director J. Stanhope	Electoral Area G
Director B. Veenhof	Electoral Area H

**Regrets:**

Director J. de Jong	District of Lantzville
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**Also in Attendance:**

G. Garbutt	General Manager Strategic & Community Development
T. Armet	Manager Building, Bylaw & Emergency Planning
J. Drew	Emergency Coordinator
J. Brand	Recording Secretary

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 1:37 pm by the Chair.

**DELEGATIONS**

**MINUTES**

MOVED Director Holme, SECONDED Director Fell, that the minutes of the Emergency Management Select Committee meeting held on Tuesday, August 27, 2013, be adopted.

CARRIED

**REPORTS**

**Transport Canada Rail Safety Measures.**

MOVED Director Stanhope, SECONDED Director Holme, that the Transport Canada Rail Safety Measures Report be received for information and Staff be directed to request ongoing reports on the transportation of dangerous goods in the Regional District of Nanaimo.

CARRIED

MOVED Director Stanhope, SECONDED Director Veenhof, that Staff be directed to contact Southern Vancouver Island Railway to determine the nature and frequency of dangerous goods being transported through the RDN Electoral Areas and the condition of the infrastructure being used to transport the goods.

CARRIED

**Status of Reviews and Assessments of Dams in the RDN Electoral Areas.**

MOVED Director Fell, SECONDED Director Houle, that the report on the status of reviews and assessments of dams in the RDN Electoral Areas be received.

CARRIED

**Amendment to the District 69 Regional Emergency Resource Agreement.**

MOVED Director McPherson, SECONDED Director Fell, that upon similar direction from the City of Parksville and the Town of Qualicum Beach, Staff be directed to amend the current Regional Emergency Resource Agreement to allow the 2014 honorarium funding to be redirected and used to fund a part-time contract position to coordinate Emergency Social Services and Emergency communications functions in District 69 area.

CARRIED

MOVED Director Holme, and SECONDED Director Veenhof, that Staff evaluate the effectiveness of the position during 2014 and provide further recommendations to the Board with respect to the continuation or expansion of the position in 2015 and beyond.

CARRIED

**Emergency Program Update Power Point (Verbal).**

MOVED Director Houle, SECONDED Director Veenhof, that the verbal Emergency Program Update report be received.

CARRIED

**NEW BUSINESS**

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

MOVED Director Fell, SECONDED Director Veenhof, that this meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

TIME: 2:48 PM

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CHAIRPERSON



RDN REPORT	
CAO APPROVAL	
EAP	
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OCT 22 2014	
RHD	
BOARD	

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Geoff Garbutt, General Manager  
Strategic & Community Development

**DATE:** October 21, 2014

**FROM:** Tom Armet, Manager  
Building, Bylaw and Emergency Planning Services

**FILE:**

**SUBJECT:** Overview of the Emergency Table Top Exercise Held April 25, 2014

### PURPOSE

To provide an overview of the Emergency Table Top Exercise held on April 25, 2014.

### BACKGROUND

#### *Exercise Scope and Objectives*

On April 25, 2014, the RDN hosted a Table Top Exercise involving senior Emergency Operations Center (EOC) staff and elected officials from the RDN, City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum Beach and the District of Lantzville. The purpose of the Exercise was to bring together senior level multi-jurisdictional EOC staff and elected officials in an applied learning environment. This Exercise was the first of its kind held by the RDN involving only the Management and Policy Groups.

The BC Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS) provides a framework for a standardized process of organizing and managing a response to emergencies and disasters in BC. The RDN and partner local governments subscribe to this framework and the structure, activities and operation of an EOC is defined and organized in accordance with the BCERMS.

Prior to commencing the Exercise, participants were provided with an overview of their roles. The Exercise involved only the local government Management Group, consisting of Management (EOC Director), Operations Chief, Planning Chief, Logistics Chief and Finance/Admin Chief, being responsible for the overall management functions within the EOC. The Exercise did not include and utilize participants who would normally fill operational functions in a full EOC activation. The Policy Group, comprised of elected officials, being responsible for guidance, establishing priorities and parameters for expenditures, direction on public information and approval of declarations and extraordinary powers, was included in the Exercise however they were not provided with specific information and training prior to the Exercise.

The scenario (Exercise "Fire Storm") focused on the development and initiation of plans and operational procedures by senior staff in response to an escalating urban interface fire impacting a large area in the RDN. The Exercise objectives were to:

- Demonstrate the need for a multi-faceted cooperative emergency management leadership response, drawing from EOC trained personnel resources from *Emergency Management Agreement* partners;
- Practice resource and information management and sharing amongst the involved local authorities in the Regional Emergency Management Agreement.
- Allow key participants to experience different leadership positions in an activated EOC roll over several different “operational periods.”
- Evaluate the EOC set up, equipment and functionality. Prior to the Exercise an Emergency Plan Review presentation was provided to all EOC responders.

Exercise “Fire Storm” was planned and facilitated with the assistance of K.R. Neilson & Associates, a consulting firm specializing in emergency management training for local authorities.

### ***During the Exercise***

A Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) fire scenario was selected as it had the potential to impact Electoral Areas ‘F’, ‘G’, Parksville and Qualicum Beach. At the beginning of the Exercise, there was a review of the five EOC management staff roles and functions of an EOC Management Team. Different operational periods allowed key participants to experience various leadership positions in an activated EOC. The scenario was input driven to Exercise the decision making process and ability of the EOC members to prioritize supportive responses to the various Incident Command Posts throughout the impacted areas. Participants were asked to respond to the events as they progressively unfolded using the principles of Incident Command. The second half of the Exercise shifted the focus from response to business resumption and recovery.

### ***Exercise Feedback and Learning Outcomes***

The Exercise concluded with a verbal round table debrief by all participants, as well as written comments from participants. Below are general categories of feedback and a brief description of how processes have been modified as a result.

#### ***EOC Set Up***

Feedback included placing Section signage higher for optimal viewing and map placement, purchasing a 24 hour digital clock and that meetings in the horseshoe area were too noisy to be fully efficient. Since the Exercise, the EOC Set-up Guide has been changed to ensure signage is placed higher where all can see it. A new clock has been purchased and will be used for activations and Exercises. Scheduled briefings or meetings will take place in meeting rooms in order to reduce the noise level in the EOC as much as possible. Other feedback included improving communications capacity in the EOC as well.

#### ***Policy Group***

Involvement of the Policy Group at the Table Top Exercise was a first at the RDN and it was recognized that given the previous history it was important to insert this group into the scenario both as a training opportunity for members of this group as well as an important component for the operation of the scenario. As above, the Policy Group did not receive specific training/instruction on the scenario, roles and responsibilities or BCERMS orientation prior to involvement in the Exercise. In hindsight, greater education on roles and the Exercise parameters would have enhanced the experience of the Policy

Group during this Table Top Exercise. Training for Policy Group members will be a focus during the next Board orientation sessions.

Feedback from elected officials in the Policy Group was generally focused on EOC procedures, roles of Directors, and overall Exercise conduct. It's important to note that this Exercise was not intended to illustrate the operations of a full-scale EOC activation and that many of the specific issues raised by elected officials were clarified by Staff following the Exercise. These issues included roles of Directors, communications, training and First Nations involvement.

Several Directors felt they could offer valuable local context about an emergency in their jurisdiction as it was occurring and could benefit from having more frequent communication with EOC staff. The current practice is for the EOC Director to phone or email updates to elected officials however video conferencing may be a consideration if elected officials cannot attend an EOC briefing. As identified above, training in the BCERMS model as well as information on how local government information is managed during a full-scale EOC activation will assist in addressing this concern.

#### *EOC Forms and Training*

Participants from each jurisdiction and every section commented that they would like to have more practice filling out the required forms. Since the Exercise, RDN, Parksville and Qualicum Beach Emergency Coordinators have collaborated to provide several 90 minute EOC section training sessions to combined EOC staff. The training focused on adding local context to function duties, discussion periods, practice filling out key forms and interactive short Exercises.

#### *Information Flow*

The Public Information team highlighted the need to manage social media as it can either quickly become a source of misinformation or can be managed to maximize clear emergency communication to the public. Since the Exercise, steps have been taken internally to clarify communications policies. Further work will be undertaken in 2015 on integrating a social media role in the EOC plan.

#### *Applied Knowledge*

Interactive learning and working with our regional partners was seen by participants as being very beneficial, with requests to do more Exercises. This feedback was instrumental in EOC Section training design that includes using regional context and works toward building interoperability with *Emergency Management Agreement* partners.

#### **Consultant Recommendations**

The Consultant provided an After Action Report (attached) following Exercise "Fire Storm" that includes the following set of recommendations with follow up comments by staff:

*That the Parties continue to train their staff in the roles and functions needed in an EOC.*

This is a general recommendation that requires no additional follow-up as the RDN Emergency Program annual work plans include a high level of continuous training for existing and new staff.

*That the addition of more laptops be considered for positions in the Public Information and Planning Sections.*

While only a few laptops were set-up for the purpose of this Exercise, the RDN has a sufficient supply of computers, laptops and mobile devices to adequately serve an EOC activation for an extended duration.

*That the next Exercise be initiated as a “cold start” set-up of the EOC, such as would happen in a real life event. The EOC was set up by the Emergency Coordinator the day before the Exercise. A “cold Start” would add realism to and create efficiencies in the EOC set-up.*

The next Exercise will be initiated as a “cold start” set-up.

*That the provision of a satellite phone for the EOC be considered as a back-up piece of equipment in the event of a catastrophic infrastructure failure, in addition to the existing amateur radio base located in the EOC.*

Several years ago the RDN acquired a satellite phone for the EOC however, with changes in hardware and satellite technology, the equipment is no longer functional. While it's recognized that cell phone service and amateur radio systems may be affected by a major infrastructure failure, it's important to note that satellite phone technology also has limitations as a back-up communication system. Should the Board wish to pursue this recommendation, further research with regards to back-up communication technology and cost implications will be necessary.

*That a regional debris disposal plan be created and implemented.*

The development of a regional debris disposal plan is a substantial undertaking with significant financial, inter-jurisdictional and environmental implications that cannot be adequately addressed in this report.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. That this report be received for information.
2. That the report be received for information and further direction provided to staff.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications to receiving this report.

## **SUMMARY**

On April 25, 2014, the RDN hosted a Table Top Exercise involving senior Emergency Operations Center (EOC) staff and elected officials from the RDN, City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum Beach and the District of Lantzville. The purpose of the Exercise was to bring together senior level multi-jurisdictional EOC staff and elected officials in an applied learning environment. The scenario (Exercise “Fire Storm”) focused on the development and initiation of plans and operational procedures by senior staff in response to an escalating urban interface fire impacting a large area in the RDN.

Valuable feedback was received from those participating in the Exercise, much of which has been clarified by Staff and/or incorporated into EOC practices to improve efficiencies. Some of the key points for future consideration include additional emergency management orientation and training for new and returning elected officials as well as enhanced communication with Area Directors during an EOC activation. The Consultant hired to assist with the Exercise also provided recommendations as outlined in the report.



Overall, the Table Top Emergency Exercise provided an excellent learning opportunity and will build upon the skills needed for more complex or functional Exercises in the future.

**RECOMMENDATION**

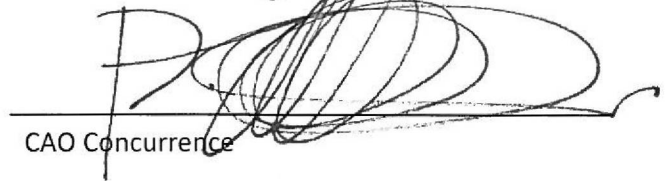
That the report on the overview of the emergency Table Top Exercise held on April 25, 2014 be received for information.



Report Writer



General Manager Concurrence



CAO Concurrence

**APPENDIX “A” - After Action Report****EXERCISE FIRESTORM | 2014****Background:**

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the RDN hosted a Senior Level Table Top Exercise, focusing on senior EOC staff (Section Chiefs/Management Group) and Elected Officials. While the exercise was the initiative of the RDN, its scope was determined by collaboration with the Regional Emergency Program Committee (REPC) members (RDN/Lantzville, Parksville and Qualicum Beach). The exercise was intended to ensure ongoing compliance with the Emergency Program Act 1996 and 2004 with respect to Local Authority and Regional District Emergency Management Training. Planning meetings were attended by the REPC Emergency Coordinators Jani Drew (RDN/Lantzville), Aaron Dawson (Parksville), Rob Damon (Qualicum Beach) and the consultant, K.R. Neilson & Associates.

It was understood that the purpose of this exercise was to bring together multi-jurisdictional senior staff and Elected Officials in an applied learning environment. The scenario was intended to involve all jurisdictions in the Oceanside area. Since the RDN's Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Area “F” ranks Wildland Urban Interface fire as ‘High’ to ‘Extreme’ in many areas of the scenario geography, and many recreational users during the summer months, the location represented an existing hazard and a likely risk. It was further understood that this exercise should:

- Demonstrate the need for a multi-faceted cooperative emergency management leadership response, drawing from EOC trained personnel resources within the entire Regional District.
- Demonstrate resource sharing amongst the involved local authorities identified in the document Emergency Management Agreement.
- Allow key participants to experience different leadership positions in an activated EOC role, over several different “operational periods”.
- Reinforce the need for robust, capable and strategic Emergency Planning and Response Programs in the D69/Oceanside area. This table top exercise will train personnel to function capably in a properly equipped and activated Emergency Operations Centre.

Upon agreement for K. R. Neilson & Associates to provide these services to the RDN, an exercise design team was created. Over a 2 month series of e-mail exchanges and face to face meetings, a suitable exercise was agreed upon. The required table top exercise was to take place April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in the RDN's EOC, located within the RDN Board Chambers of RDN headquarters at 6300 Hammond Road.

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## EXERCISE FIRESTORM | 2014

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### Exercise Objectives

Exercise Fire Storm was to focus on the development and initiation of plans and operational procedures, including relevant documentation, by senior staff the RDN in response to an escalating urban interface forest fire impacting a large area of the Nanaimo Regional District. It was also to be an opportunity to apply previously learned skills effecting procedures, documentation and application of the policies of the Regional Emergency Response Plan.

At the beginning of the exercise, there would be a brief review of the five EOC Management Staff roles and functions of an EOC Management Team via a power point presentation. The input driven scenario is to exercise the decision making process and ability of the EOC members to prioritize supportive responses to various Incident Command Posts scattered throughout the impacted areas of the District and Electoral area "F".

This exercise was also designed to evaluate the Emergency Operations Centre's setup, equipment and functionality.

Exercise facilitators would be present during the exercise and, but only permitted to provide limited guidance where needed for the success of this learning experience.

At the conclusion of the exercise, there was to be an exercise end de-brief (hot wash up) with all of the players. Comments generated from this de-brief would be used to compile a written after action report (AAR) that shall identify and recommend methods to address concerns and findings of any issues brought forward.

This report may also be used to identify and recommend any relevant updating changes to the regional emergency plan, and additional needs of the EOC.

### During the Exercise:

Players were requested by a separately distributed document prior to the exercise to:

- Respond to the exercise events and information as if the emergency was real, unless otherwise directed. For the purpose of the exercise, some artificialities were effected, especially timelines. Parts of the scenario may have seemed implausible. Recognition that the exercise had objectives to satisfy, and may incorporate seemingly unrealistic aspects to do so was explained (transition to Recovery from Response). However, every effort was made to balance realism and artificiality.
- At the end of the exercise, participate in an exercise de-brief and "hot wash up". They were also asked to help with the EOC "de-mobilization" and clean-up.

## EXERCISE FIRESTORM | 2014

- Provide any notes or documents to an evaluator for completion of the After Action Report (AAR). The AAR is essential for outlining the strengths and recommended areas for changes or improvement to the Emergency Response Plan and EOC facility realized during the exercise.

### **Exercise Conduct:**

The exercise convened at 08:30 in the Directors Chambers. There was a mix of participants from the Regional District of Nanaimo, District of Lantzville, City of Parksville, and Town of Qualicum Beach. There were 6 members of the RDN Board of Directors also present.

The participants were initially assigned to functional positions, which would rotate with each shift change in order to provide different functional role experiences. After a brief introduction and power point review of EOC operational roles, the exercise began.

The initial scenario itself (appendix "D") was introduced, and the Teams were asked to begin to respond to the events as they progressively unfolded. Using the principles of Incident Command, scenario updates were submitted sequentially as the situation escalated, accompanied by the presentation of specific written functional position tasking injects relating to certain scenario update(s). This process took up most of the morning, but was suspended for a generous (and much appreciated) lunch provided by the RDN.

At the conclusion of the lunch, the final scenario updates were issued, lastly shifting the focus from to events that also could potentially be encountered as the RDN transitioned from response to business resumption / recovery.

The exercise inject portion was completed by 15:00. Immediately following that, a person to person de-brief was then conducted with all of the participants invited to comment on the day's proceedings, either pro or con. This was followed up by having the participants complete a brief written exercise de-brief questionnaire prior to their departure.

### **EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS:**

The following points are the direct comments received by the exercise participants themselves, and are un- edited in order to reflect realism.

- EOC Set up: put the Section Banners up higher near Planning and Ops – they moved them in order to tape maps up on the wall
- Meeting in the horseshoe area too crowded, disruptive to other groups
- Good interaction between Planning and Ops
- The various jurisdictional staff had a good knowledge base for evac planning
- Fin/Admin – activated fire mutual aid, proactively checked that \$2.0 million in reserve funds were available and that purchasing cards had been set up if needed

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- Excellent collaboration with the Public Info team – media releases produced in a timely fashion, approvals sought and received.
- Not immediately understood by one EOCD that a Declaration is not required for an Evac Alert
- Good Policy Group briefing by EOCDs (geographic overview of evac area, fire path, actions taken, Declaration and media release coming at next briefing.
- Good comment about Ops – took a while to get used to not being such ‘Doers’ and take direct action. They eventually utilized the Liaison Officer more – better information flow for others to keep current on operations on the ground.
- digital clock would be useful
- Legal Documentation requires a Corporate Officer. When these staff are not busy they can join the Public Info team as they are the staff that approve media releases in day to day operations

**Debrief Notes** as recorded from verbal feedback requests of some Functional Section participants:

### **POLICY GROUP:**

- RDN Director Veenhoff: inquired about improving communications capacity in EOC. Director Fell: he lived in evac area – what is his role? He could provide local context,
- T of QB Councillor Bill Lockmeyer – do media briefings off site.
- Director McPherson: have set media briefing times, don’t have them hanging around
- Director Young – thought a good practice for a real situation, ensure EOC secured and entrance restricted. Conduct media activity off site.

### **LEGAL & DOCUMENTATION:**

- not that busy, could augment PIO team
- During quiet times, review process binders to pre-plan and prepare (forms, processes, etc.)
- Each time a meeting is held it should be announced as to time and location
- A connection needs to be established for this group to Chair/Deputy Chair

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION TEAM:**

- Could have used faster clearance on release approval.
- Need a dedicated social media monitor.

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## EXERCISE FIRESTORM | 2014

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- Have Island Health PIO involved.
- Automatically have PIO at Mgmt Group meetings.
- Appoint a Deputy PIO and have a dedicated person to maintain the position log
- Need process to get clearance to release info to media
- Keep media away from all active players at EOC (RC and at-site)
- Use of Twitter and Facebook need to be built into the plan – once posted, a copy of the message needs to be posted in EOC somewhere for public and media viewing
- Island Health representation needed
- Could use a second computer
- This function felt the need to be invited to the Management team meeting
- One person should be designated to keep the position log
- The Director involved should be included in review and revision of media release before released
- Social media can be a help or a nightmare – have to be on top of situational awareness

### **MANGEMENT GROUP:**

- Fast pace hard for learning (Twyla). Learning curve for Geoff who had to go from being Planning Section Chief to EOCD with no notice.
- Should have Deputy EOCD for all shifts – have L.O (Jani/EC) do this as there are 2 other L.Os (Jack and Brian).
- Do cross-training
- Don't do exercise in 'real time' – go slower for learning to happen

### **FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION:**

- Paper flow not consistent with all sections. Finance needs all info. How to track time of multi-jurisdictional staff?
- How to track time of people in field?
- Need to understand paper flow and information requirements from each function
- Documents which would have flowed between function teams did not because of short time frame
- Perhaps in future have 'mock' forms completed to illustrate movement of paperwork
- How do we track staff/volunteer's time?

### **LOGISTICS:**

- Hard to keep on top of paper flow. Last to get info of purchases. Need tabs in binders. Paperwork and paper trail not clear
- What to fill out?

## EXERCISE FIRESTORM | 2014

- Where does it go?
- Need Purchase Orders as well as Finance team – perhaps Purchase Order stapled to Authorization to Purchase
- Who does authorization to Purchase form?

### OPERATIONS:

- In reality, would need agency reps.
- Good info in binders.
- Felt training gave confidence.
- They 'got the job' done by working as a team.
- Important to liaise with LO and other Sections
- Calm environment, staff from different jurisdictions offered a multi-faceted perspective. Utilize 'local area experts'
- Remember to liaison with other functions before making things happen
- Use the screen to project Current Situation Report Update
- Review of paperwork needed

### PLANNING:

- Need better inter-section communications (ie: staff an Planning-Ops Liaison position).
- Have a 'Forms Only' workshop.
- Boxes well organized and helpful – should be standardized amongst jurisdictions
- This function is to maintain Current Situation Status Board
- Hindered by lack of current status of situation
- Needed better data in order to interconnect with other functions
- Design a course on forms and how to use them in each function
- Planning and operations liaised continuously

### COMMENTS FROM THE EXERCISE PLANNING TEAM ( JANI, RDN, AARON, PARKSVILLE, ROB, TOWN OF QUALICUM BEACH)

- Communication started out bumpy and in silos but which was quickly resolved.
- The Public Information Team was very busy and needs many people. If there is an error here, it gets huge public scrutiny due to the visibility and limited filters!
- Planning found maps very useful – GIS staff would also be necessary
- Finance/Administration kept a very good handle on expenses
- There was good interaction by the time the Second Section of the exercise began
- It was evident that many questions were being asked between function teams
- Today 4 local governments came together and acted as 1 group
- Reality is that staff WILL be manning each function from different region

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## EXERCISE FIRESTORM | 2014

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- More practice in the future is recommended

### GENERAL COMMENTS FROM THE CITY OF PARKSVILLE PARTICIPANTS

- Everyone was happy with the exercise. They appreciated how it was set up to allow them to better understand their role in the EOC without the complication of focusing on forms.
- Now that they have a better understanding of their roles, they would like to have another exercise including forms.
- No one attending thought there was a problem with the existing plan and no changes were suggested.
- For the next exercise, they would like what they referred to as more realistic injects more often.
- Many explained they were making up materials during the protracted meetings in order for them to have something to do and allow for them to fill in any blanks to determine how to solve the matter at hand.

### GENERAL COMMENTS FROM THE TOWN OF QUALICUM BEACH PARTICIPANTS

- Some felt having the policy group there was not necessary
- More training on forms used in the EOC
- Very pleased with the overall participation
- Sections focusing on the “what ifs”
- Good conversation/communication in the sections, briefings, and across sections.
- More input from I.C. to drive the exercise
- It was a huge success and I look forward to working on another for the near future



## EXERCISE FIRESTORM | 2014

### CONSULTANTS OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

This exercise opened with the provision of an EOC functional position overview, followed by the assignment and exercising Team position assignments covering 4 operational period shift changes. The focus of the exercise injects was to provide a realistic scenario that was representative of a real life wild land urban interface fire event occurring in the geography of the communities involved. The time frame of the exercise, although compacted from a real life event, succeeded in demonstrating the needs and benefits for inter-operability. It also succeeded in identifying some operational and administrative differences between the City of Parksville and the Town of Qualicum Beach. These were positive outcomes that will permit future collaborative discussions for joint emergency and mutual aid responses.

The exercise was very well accepted by the participants, with many expressed desires for more of them in the future. Suggestions of further training and some specific targets were also offered. Perhaps the best outcome of this exercise was that the two communities proved that they can work effectively together, and that there are positive benefits in doing so. The value of the RDN Emergency Management Agreement currently being re-negotiated by the Parties was also validated.

The following recommendations are forwarded for consideration:

- That the Parties continue to train their staff in the roles and functions needed in an EOC. Migration of trained employees in Emergency Management is a reality of life, and staying abreast of these migrations is essential in being able to field a cohesive and interactive Team. Continued training is a key to the success and ability to do so.
- That the addition of more laptops be considered for positions in the Public Information and Planning Sections.
- That the next exercise be initiated as a “cold start” set up of the EOC, such as would happen in a real life event. This exercise saw the EOC set up by the Emergency Coordinator and I T section during the afternoon before the exercise. A “cold start” by some key Logistics Support Unit members would add realism and ultimately create efficiencies to the EOC set up.
- That the provision of a “Satellite phone” for the EOC be considered as a backup piece of equipment in the event of a catastrophic communications infrastructure failure, in addition to the existing amateur radio base station located in the EOC. The total reliance of hard wired and cellular phones during a major event can be risky.
- That a District debris disposal plan for the participating Emergency Agreement signatories be created and implemented.

It was a pleasure to be a part of this exercise inception, design and successful execution.

Respectfully submitted,

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## EXERCISE FIRESTORM | 2014

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K. R. Neilson,  
CEC, cd, CEM

### Appendix 1 – Exercise Scenarios presented:

#### Exercise Opening Scenario

- A resident has contacted 911 (passed to Fire Dispatch), advising of smoke from what now appears to be a forest fire caused by a lightning strike. The Errington Fire Dept. Duty Chief was dispatched at 08:15 and attended the area. Upon arriving in the vicinity, he observed that wind driven fires, approaching rank 3 in magnitude, are travelling in a north-westerly direction. There are now concerns for structures and occupants in the general area bounded by Bellevue Rd to the north, Middlegate Rd to the west, Evergreen Rd to the south, and Allsbrook Rd. itself to the east. The Errington Fire Dept. Duty Chief has determined that the Ministry of Forests and Range must be involved, and he has also contacted the RDN Emergency Coordinator to provide a situation report. The situation appears to exceed local fire department and mutual aid capacity. The Regional District of Nanaimo's Emergency Coordinator, having also been contacted via Fire Dispatch, has initiated the RDN'S EOC Emergency Activation and Notification fan out. The recommendation is to set up the primary EOC, located at the RDN's Board Chambers, with a complement of senior RDN staff to coordinate management of this situation.

#### Scenario Update; Operational Period #1 – Activation of the EOC

- MoFR, the lead agency, has expressed concern for the safety of the Island Highway 19, as it is near the impacted area. Fire Dispatch is suggesting that mutual aid activation from neighbouring fire stations should be considered. MoFR is also requesting confirmation of the activation of the Regional District of Nanaimo Emergency Operations centre, as the fire has the potential going to get big, and fast. The RDN EOC formally requests assistance, per the *Emergency Management Agreement*, from Parksville, Qualicum Beach and Lantzville to assist in the response efforts. Senior staffs from these jurisdictions are able to travel safely to the RDN's EOC located at 6300 Hammond Bay Rd.
- Parksville has issues as well, as the fire encroaching over Highway 19 has the potential to impact the southern portion of Parksville. The Parksville Emergency Coordinator realizes that this is a potentially life threatening situation - if the fire continues to travel at its current rate of advance, it could involve local subdivisions. The weather forecast is for sustained N.W. winds at 45 kmh for this morning, and shifting to Easterly 60 kmh later in the morning and early afternoon. Cooler temperatures are not expected for the next 72 hours. Skies are becoming overcast with smoke. Occasional thunder and lightning is expected over the next 48 hours.

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## EXERCISE FIRESTORM | 2014

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### Scenario Update; Operational Period #2 – Shift Change

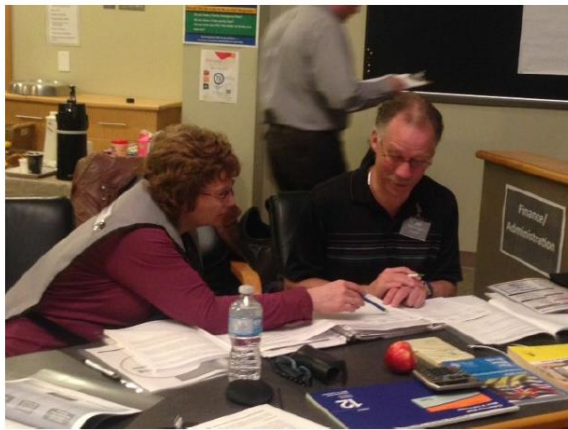
- The forest fire is continuing to increase in size, and now has the Oceanside area very alarmed. Smoke from the fire has reached Qualicum Beach and the airport now has restricted use and air quality may potentially be a concern for vulnerable persons (seniors, various disabilities/conditions etc). There is evidence that panic is beginning to occur, and many residents are beginning to “freelance. There is a strong need for enhanced communications to the population at risk.
- The tourism sector is wondering what to advise their guests to do as the fire has jumped Highway 19.
- Local first responders have been working for a long time in the intense efforts to get the situation under control. They are beginning to tire significantly. The fire shows no sign of slowing down.

### Scenario Update; Operational Period #3 – Shift Change

- The fire is now threatening the southern portions of Parksville. Winds are now swinging to a north westerly direction, which could cause impacts into the town centre.
- Rath Trevor Park is now on the danger list, as are tourist accommodation /resorts in the vicinity
- There is a gas station present at Hwy 19A and Englishman River
- There is a major bridge at Hwy 19A and Englishman River

### Scenario Update; Operational Period #4 – Shift Change and Transition to Recovery Phase

- The fire is now under control in the southern portions of Parksville and south western parts of Errington.
- Winds are continuing to swing in a north westerly direction, and away from both Parksville and Town of Qualicum Beach’s town centres.
- Rath Trevor Park is now also off the danger list, as are tourist accommodation /resorts in the vicinity.
- Area residents who have evacuated are anxious to return to their homes.
- Priority planning for business resumption and community normalcy are quickly needed.



ATTACHMENT "B" - Exercise Photos



RDN REPORT		[Handwritten initials]
CAO APPROVAL		
EAP		
COW		
<b>OCT 22 2014</b>		
RHD		
BOARD		

# MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Tom Armet, Manager  
Building, Bylaw and Emergency Planning Services

**DATE:** October 21, 2014

**FROM:** Jani M. Drew, Emergency Coordinator

**FILE:**

**SUBJECT:** Emergency Operations Center Notification and Activation System

**PURPOSE**

To provide an update on the Regional District of Nanaimo Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Notification and Activation Protocol and to seek direction on the implementation of an automated mass notification system.

**BACKGROUND**

The RDN held an EOC notification and activation protocol drill during Emergency Preparedness week on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The purpose of the drill was to practice the fan out system to test our EOC responder capacity, taking into account the availability of staff during normal work hours. This method has been tested several times over the years with fairly good success in terms of the overall protocol and turn out rates.

In practicing any protocol or drill, learning from what worked and what didn't work as well, is critical to ongoing success. For several reasons, this particular notification drill had some challenges. In particular, contact with EOC staff and response to the notification using the existing method was less than satisfactory. Some very useful feedback was provided by EOC staff and Directors and based on that feedback the following modifications have been made to the EOC notification and activation protocol:

- The primary call out is now done by only 4 individuals: the EOC Director, Liaison Officer and Deputy Liaison Officers.
- The number of staff on the primary call out list has been reduced to Section Chiefs and a few key roles. Upon notification, these individuals will report to the EOC, attend the initial briefing and then determine staffing needs (secondary call outs).
- Call back confirmation requirements have been removed from the protocol which makes the process faster, simpler and more streamlined.
- Laminated wallet sized cards have been issued to those on the primary call out list for ease of contacting the secondary call outs from any location.

In addition to the foregoing, it was suggested through an RDN Director, that staff explore the feasibility of implementing an automated mass notification system. These systems are in use by some local

government agencies for a variety of purposes, including EOC activations. Based on preliminary inquiries into the various systems on the market, it has been determined that an objective analysis will be necessary to provide an accurate assessment of compatibility with our existing systems and the financial impacts.

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. Direct staff to investigate the feasibility of implementing an automated mass notification system.
2. Receive this report for information and provide further direction to staff.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

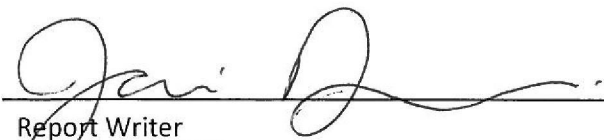
There are several types of automated mass notification systems on the market which vary in complexity and cost, typically in the range of \$5,000 to \$30,000. A full assessment of these systems will be necessary to determine if an automated system would be cost effective and create efficiencies within or as a replacement for the current RDN notification system. Other considerations would be technical compatibility with existing systems, reliability and the potential for broader uses within the organization.

**SUMMARY**


The RDN held an EOC notification and activation protocol drill during Emergency Preparedness week on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The purpose of the drill was to practice the fan out system to test our EOC responder capacity, taking into account the availability of staff during normal work hours. EOC staff and Area Directors provided critical feedback resulting in several changes being made to our existing notification and activation system. The potential for using an automated mass notification system for EOC activation was also proposed. Staff is recommending that the feasibility of implementing such a system be investigated and that options be provided for the Board’s consideration in 2015.


**RECOMMENDATION**

That staff be directed to investigate the feasibility of implementing an automated mass notification system in the RDN and report back on available options for the Board’s consideration.

  
Report Writer

  
General Manager Concurrence

  
Manager Concurrence

  
CAO Concurrence

**COMMENTS:**