

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)
National On-reserve Emergency Management
Plan

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

In recent years, First Nation communities have been significantly affected by natural disasters, including major floods, forest fires, and tornados. This pattern reflects the increased frequency and intensity of emergencies throughout Canada. First Nation communities, however, are often more vulnerable to natural hazards due to their geographic remoteness, low population density, and associated capacity gaps.

The federal government plays an important role in the delivery of emergency management services to First Nations communities.

This Plan is meant to provide an overview of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada's role in emergency management for on-reserve First Nation communities.

1.1 Authorities and Legislation

The Minister of Public Safety is responsible for coordinating emergency management activities among federal government institutions and in cooperation with provinces, territories and other entities.

The [Emergency Management Act 2007](#) states that each federal minister is responsible for the identification of risks that are within, or related to their area of responsibility, including those related to critical infrastructure, such as food supply, electricity grids, transportation, communications and public safety systems.

Section 91(24) of the [Constitution Act 1867](#) prescribes the legislative authority of the Government of Canada for "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians." This authority is delegated to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada as per the [Indian Act](#) and the [Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Act](#), (R.S.C. 1985 c. I-6, sec. 4).

INAC's Treasury Board Program Authority #330 sets out the terms and conditions for the Emergency Management Assistance Program, which applies to reserve lands, and lands set aside in the Yukon. The program structure recognizes that emergency management responsibilities in Canada are shared by federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, as well as First Nations and their partners, including individual citizens who have a responsibility to be prepared for disasters and contribute to community resiliency.

INAC's Transfer Payment Authority – Contributions to Support the Construction and Maintenance of Community Infrastructure is the principle vehicle for the provision of community infrastructure funding to First Nations, including structural

mitigation projects and fire protection¹ on reserve. The Department allocates funding for the construction and the maintenance of community infrastructure to First Nations at the regional level through formula, proposal-based project funding or as a combination of both.

1.2 Whole-of-Government Approach to Emergency Management

Disasters are increasing in frequency and magnitude, underscoring the need for a cohesive approach to emergency management that emphasizes risk mitigation while continuing to strengthen preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities.

The [Federal Emergency Response Plan](#) identifies and describes the mechanisms and processes that are used for emergency management by the Government of Canada. It is designed to harmonize federal emergency response efforts with those of the provincial and territorial governments, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. The [Emergency Management Framework for Canada](#) is the overarching document that guides how federal/provincial/territorial governments, in collaboration with municipalities/communities, Indigenous Peoples, tri-services, academia, volunteer and non-governmental organizations, and the private sector assess risks and work together to prevent/mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk to Canadians. Given that all levels of government have a responsibility for emergency management and public safety in Canada, the Framework also establishes the mechanisms and principles to strengthen federal/provincial/territorial collaboration and ensure more coordinated, complementary actions among the federal/provincial/territorial governmental initiatives.

Canada has also adopted the United Nations [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction \(2015-2030\)](#), which establishes international priorities for disaster risk reduction. It takes into consideration important linkages with climate adaptation, and reflects the shared responsibility among all sectors of society to enhance resilience. The Sendai Framework sets out four strategic priorities that align well with Canada's approach to disaster risk reduction and the Emergency Management Framework. Compliance with the Sendai Framework is voluntary, however, Canada is committed to its domestic implementation, including through complementary elements of the Emergency Management Framework, including:

1. INAC provides core capital funding to First Nations on an annual basis, and First Nation Band Councils manage fire protection services on First Nation lands. First Nations prioritize their spending to meet the needs of their communities for fire protection services, which may include the purchase of equipment and infrastructure (fire trucks, fire halls, etc.), operations & maintenance of fire protection equipment and assets, and firefighter training. As part of its support for fire protection, INAC also provides funds to the [Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada](#) (AFAC) to coordinate a number of fire prevention awareness and training initiatives.

1. Improving understanding of risk;
2. Strengthening governance;
3. Increasing investment in disaster reduction and mitigation; and
4. Enhancing preparedness and recovery to build back better following a disaster.

SECTION 2: SCOPE

This Plan applies to emergencies that have the potential to threaten the health, safety and security of First Nations communities and outlines INAC's approach to supporting emergency management on First Nation reserves. It is not meant to replace provincial or territorial procedures and plans but merely to complement them from a federal perspective.

In Canada, four pillars of emergency management have been adopted and are taken into consideration in all aspects of emergency planning and operations:

- **Mitigation** - Actions taken to prevent or reduce the consequences of an emergency. Mitigation activities consist of identifying vulnerabilities and taking proactive measures to diminish the impact of potential emergencies.
- **Preparedness** - Actions taken to prepare for effective emergency response. Preparedness activities consist of planning for response and recovery during emergencies as well as training, and exercising of emergency management plans.
- **Response** - Actions taken immediately before, during, or after an emergency to manage its consequences and minimize its impacts. Response activities may include emergency public communication, emergency medical assistance, or evacuations.
- **Recovery** - Actions taken after an emergency incident to restore a community to its pre-emergency condition. Recovery measures commence during response, and also reduce the potential future vulnerabilities of the community while improving planning for these events.

INAC supports First Nations in mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery activities. Emergencies that are within the scope of INAC's responsibilities can be defined as immediate threats to health, safety, and business continuity on First Nations reserves. In brief, the objectives of INAC's approach to emergency management on reserve are to:

- ensure that First Nations have access to emergency assistance services comparable to those available to other residents in their respective province or territory;
- protect the health and safety of First Nation communities and individuals;
- meet INAC's obligations under the *Emergency Management Act*;
- protect property and infrastructure, First Nations lands, assets, and the environment;
- mitigate the risks of emergencies in First Nation communities through proactive measures;
- ensure a coordinated national approach to emergency management in First Nation communities;
- enhance the capacity of First Nation communities to effectively address emergency situations;
- reduce economic and social losses for First Nation communities; and
- provide guidance for INAC's emergency management planning and operations in the North.

Incidents which impact INAC employees, assets, or which are directly related to internal departmental business continuity planning are outside the scope of this current document. Events which have the potential to impact the health, safety, and business continuity of INAC assets and employees fall under the scope of INAC's Security and Accommodation Division. This division is responsible for safety of INAC employees, assets and safeguarding of information as per the Policy on Government Security and works with the Corporate Services Branch to help implement business continuity protocols when necessary.

Other stakeholders also have a role to play in emergency management on reserves, as summarized in the Roles and Responsibilities section below.

SECTION 3: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Emergency management can involve a number of different stakeholders, each with their own roles and responsibilities. Depending on the circumstances, assistance is sought from local, provincial, and territorial authorities, with provincial and territorial governments requesting federal government support for emergencies that are beyond their capacity. INAC works with provincial and territorial governments to ensure that on-reserve First Nations have access to emergency assistance services comparable to those available elsewhere in Canada.

3.1 Individuals

The responsibility to deal with emergency incidents starts at home with the individual. The Government of Canada suggests individuals be prepared to care

for themselves and their families for a minimum of 72 hours by following the “[Get Prepared](#)” program.

As the capacity of the individual to cope with the emergency incident diminishes, the responsibility shifts to successive levels of government, as the resources and expertise of each are needed. This recognizes that when an emergency occurs, people will see to their own safety to the greatest extent possible before seeking outside assistance.

3.2 First Nations

In order to ensure that emergencies are managed as efficiently as possible at the community level, First Nations are encouraged to do the following:

- conduct a hazard, risk and vulnerability assessment of their communities;
- create an effective emergency management plan and ensuring it is maintained and exercised;
- conduct public emergency response training, hazard awareness and education programs; and,
- provide leadership and direction during an emergency situation.

3.3 Provinces and Territories

Provinces and territories govern provincial/territorial emergency management organizations coordinate response activities, conduct planning and research, training, and administer and deliver disaster financial assistance programs in their respective province or territory.

In most provinces, in order to fulfill INAC’s responsibility to support First Nations in emergency management, the Department ensures that on-reserve First Nations have access to emergency service programs comparable to municipalities of similar size and circumstance through negotiated service agreements between the Department, Provinces and Territories, and other stakeholders. These agreements help to ensure successful coordinated response and recovery efforts, clarify roles and responsibilities, and support enhanced preparedness activities, including training and capacity building for the development of more robust emergency plans for on-reserve First Nations.

3.4 Government of Canada

Most emergencies are local in nature and are managed at the community or provincial/territorial level. The federal government can become involved when

requests for assistance are received due to capacity limitations and the scope of the emergency.

Under the federal *Emergency Management Act*, the Minister of Public Safety is responsible for coordinating the Government of Canada's response to an emergency or disaster of national significance. Public Safety Canada is responsible for exercising leadership relating to emergency management in Canada by coordinating, among government institutions and in cooperation with the provinces and other entities, emergency management activities. It has no legislated responsibilities specifically for on-reserve emergency management for First Nations.

Other federal departments also play a role in Emergency Management on reserve when an incident falls under their area of responsibility. For instance, Health Canada is responsible for ensuring access to or providing health services on reserves.

3.4.1 Government Operations Centre

The [Government Operations Centre](#) (GOC) provides an all-hazards integrated federal emergency response to events (potential or actual, natural or human-induced, accidental or intentional) of national interest. It provides 24/7 monitoring and reporting, national-level situational awareness, warning products and integrated risk assessments, as well as national-level planning and whole-of-government response management. During periods of heightened response, the GOC is augmented by staff from other government departments/agencies (OGD) and non-governmental organizations (NGO) who physically work in the GOC and connect to it virtually.

INAC liaises with the Government Operations Centre by providing situational awareness, subject matter experts, and by participating in Emergency Management exercises and emergency event planning.

3.4.2 INAC

As part of a more comprehensive approach to emergency management on reserve, the Government of Canada has introduced a single window to secure funding for First Nation emergency costs. On April 1, 2014, INAC assumed responsibility for costs for on-reserve emergency events which previously may have been eligible for reimbursement under Public Safety Canada's Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements. This single window provides First Nations, provinces and territories with improved access to emergency funding when needed.

INAC is working with provincial and territorial governments as well as other stakeholders to update or put in place agreements related to the delivery of emergency management services to on-reserve First Nations. These agreements ensure First Nations have access to comparable emergency assistance and support and will also provide certainty regarding eligible First Nation emergency management costs so that responses can be implemented rapidly and without unnecessary delay.

3.4.2.1 Minister

INAC's Minister is the lead federal minister responsible for supporting emergency mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery on reserves across Canada.

3.4.2.2 Regional Operations Senior Assistant Deputy Minister

The Regional Operations Sector's Senior Assistant Deputy Minister plays an important role in the working relationship between INAC Headquarters and INAC Regions. The Regional Operations Sector's Senior Assistant Deputy Minister is responsible for the delivery of national and regional programs and services in all reserve lands south of the 60th parallel and certain lands set aside in the Yukon.

3.4.2.3 National Capital Region Emergency Management Directorate

The main roles and responsibilities of INAC's Emergency Management Directorate in the National Capital Region in emergency management are threefold: (1) acting as a funding mechanism for on-reserve emergency management activities; (2) providing situational awareness to senior officials within INAC, Public Safety Canada and the general federal emergency management community and partners; and (3) developing policy to support on-reserve emergency management planning and operations, including mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery activities.

3.4.2.4 Regions

INAC regional offices support the Emergency Management Assistance Program by:

- helping to build and enhance partnerships with First Nations and other public, private and non-governmental sector emergency partners;
- establishing and implementing strategic projects and initiatives to support on-reserve First Nations under the four pillars of emergency management;

- providing advice and guidance on program activities;
- providing tools and resources for emergency planning and training;
- informing headquarters about on-reserve First Nations under risk of, or experiencing emergencies;
- overseeing bilateral agreements between provinces/territories and INAC for the delivery of emergency response services and management programs;
- ensuring funding applications are justifiable, defensible, and align with the Emergency Management Assistance Program's terms and conditions; and
- facilitating the development, maintenance, testing, and implementation of regional emergency management plans.

Regional directors general are responsible for overseeing the involvement of their regional offices in emergency incidents in their respective regions, which includes liaison with local authorities, First Nations, and Emergency Management Organizations. Regional directors general are also responsible for ensuring that timely situational awareness is provided to INAC headquarters, and for providing financial oversight of expenditures during emergency incidents.

The Department's regional offices also work in collaboration with First Nations to establish and prioritize five-year capital plans according to the Capital Facilities and Maintenance Program's National Priority Ranking Framework. The highest priority is assigned to projects which mitigate the most urgent health and safety risks. Protection of assets through adequate operation and maintenance is also key to mitigating health and safety concerns and ensuring that existing and new assets reach their full life cycle.

INAC regional offices are responsible for developing, exercising, implementing and maintaining Regional Emergency Management Plans.

3.4.2.5 Communications

The Communications Branch is responsible for all official departmental communications, internal and external, with all key stakeholder audiences including: employees, First Nation partners, other levels of government/government Departments, the media, and the general public.

The Branch also provides expert support and strategic public communications advice on issues relating to the public and media environment for emergencies involving First Nations. Depending on the scope, regional and/or headquarters communications staff play a key role in managing external communications by ensuring that media outlets are kept informed and up to date. They also have an important role in supporting Emergency Management and preparing and releasing critical departmental communications.

3.4.2.6 Employees

In some cases, INAC employees may be called upon to perform a liaison role.

Liaison officers are individuals that act as the link between two organizations to communicate and coordinate their activities. INAC liaison officers provide a link between INAC and the Government Operations Centre, on-reserve First Nations, regional Emergency Management Organizations, or various other stakeholders. Acting as subject matter experts, liaison officers provide information on INAC roles, responsibilities, mandates and plans, as well as timely situational awareness.

3.4.2.7 Other Entities

At the request of an on-reserve First Nation, INAC, or province or territory, a non-government organization (e.g. the Canadian Red Cross) or other Indigenous organization, may support the management of an emergency.

Once identified, these entities become part of the First Nation's emergency planning process, and should have clearly defined roles and responsibilities outlined within the First Nation's all-hazards emergency management plan, in order to develop an integrated emergency management structure and processes/procedures with all stakeholders.

SECTION 4: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

As of April 1, 2014, INAC assumed responsibility for all costs for on-reserve emergency events.

The Emergency Management Assistance Program, the Capital Facilities Maintenance Program, and the First Nation Infrastructure Fund are the key federal funding agents for the four pillars of emergency management on-reserve lands. The Emergency Management Assistance Program funds non-structural mitigation, preparedness, and response and recovery costs, whereas the Capital Facilities Maintenance Program and the First Nations Infrastructure Fund provide investments in structural mitigation infrastructure.

With the exception of upfront preparedness funding for provincial, territorial and third-party service providers and wildfire management services funding, the Emergency Management Assistance Program funding is distributed annually based on proposals for emergency preparedness and non-structural mitigation projects and applications for response and recovery costs. All proposals and applications are to be submitted to and reviewed by the appropriate INAC

Regional Office and then forwarded to INAC Headquarters for final consideration. All costs must be defensible and align with the [Emergency Management Program's Terms and Conditions](#) as well as provincial and territorial norms.

Funding for structural mitigation projects are disbursed in accordance with established [Capital Facilities and Maintenance Program](#),² and the [First Nations Infrastructure Fund](#) arrangements and, more specifically, through INAC's annual capital planning process. Potential projects are placed on the First Nation Infrastructure Investment Plan for INAC staff to review against internal ranking frameworks and local needs and priorities to guide investment decisions.

GLOSSARY

The definitions are drawn from the Federal *Emergency Management Act* 2007, Public Safety Canada's Emergency Management Framework and Federal Emergency Response Plan.

All-Hazards: The term "*all-hazards*" is the standard by which emergencies are defined under the *Emergency Management Act*. This could include a wide range of situations including: tornados; earthquakes; landslides; avalanches; floods; forest fires; industrial accidents; hurricanes; air crashes; storm surges; and severe storms.

Awareness: The continual process of collecting, analyzing, and disseminating intelligence, information or knowledge to allow organizations and individuals to anticipate requirements and to respond effectively.

Disaster: Essentially a social phenomenon that results when a hazard intersects with a vulnerable community in a way that exceeds or overwhelms the community's ability to cope and may cause serious harm to the safety, health, welfare, property or environment of people. This may be triggered by a naturally occurring phenomenon which has its origins within the geophysical or biological environment or by human action or error, whether malicious or unintentional, including technological failures, accidents and terrorist acts.

Emergency: An emergency is a present or imminent event that requires prompt coordination of actions concerning persons or property to protect the health, safety or welfare of people, or to limit damage to property or the environment.

2. The scope of the Capital Facilities Maintenance Program extends to the Yukon, where financial assistance is provided to six Indian Act First Nations, for capital infrastructure projects under \$1.5 million and related ongoing operation and maintenance. Other Indigenous communities located in Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut are subject to various self-government agreements and are not eligible for CFMP funding.

Emergency Management Plan: As defined in the *Emergency Management Act*, a program, arrangement or other measure for dealing with an emergency by the civil population, or for dealing with a civil emergency by the Canadian Forces in accordance with the *National Defence Act*.

First Nation: A term that came into common usage in the 1970s. Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists. The term "First Nation" is used to replace the word "Band" in the name of a community.

Natural Hazard: A threat attributable to forces of nature.

Non-Government Organization: A non-profit organization that is based on the interests of its members, individuals, or institutions that is not created by government, but may work cooperatively with government. Such organizations serve a public purpose, not a private benefit. Examples of non-governmental organizations include faith-based charity organizations and the Canadian Red Cross.

Risk: The combination of the likelihood and the consequence of a specified hazard being realized. This refers to the vulnerability, proximity or exposure to hazards, which affects the likelihood of an adverse impact.

Structural Mitigation Infrastructure: Physical infrastructure built to reduce or mitigate the possible impact of hazards. This includes the application of engineering techniques toward hazard resistance and resilience in structures or systems.