



#### 8.4.4

#### *Evacuation*

One of the most challenging situations facing emergency responders during a wildfire is evacuation of the populace. The recent confusion that resulted during the Slave Lake fire evacuation highlights the need for effective pre-planning.

Evacuation can be complicated by smoke, fire, traffic accidents, or congestion in key areas. Rossland's Emergency Program Office developed an all-hazards emergency management plan detailed in the CoR Emergency Plan. The Emergency Plan references an Evacuation Map<sup>6</sup> featuring six evacuation areas identified within the southern portion of the municipality boundary.

An evacuation procedure would be triggered by:

- 1) a major wildfire or fires starting or advancing to within a pre-determined distance of CoR or;
- 2) a fire ignition immediately adjacent to or within CoR that spreads aggressively and threatens the City or access to City by direct fire impingement or ember transport / spot fire ignition.

Fire and emergency response personnel should monitor wildfire activity in the vicinity of CoR via regular communication with WMB fire officials. Evacuation procedures should establish evacuation triggers for specific areas and identify primary / secondary evacuation routes and safety zones for evacuee marshalling.

While a complete evacuation of the CoR due to wildfire threat is unlikely, evacuation of specific areas or resident groups (those vulnerable to high smoke concentrations and poor air quality) may be required.

Access to and from the CoR centre is provided by three separate highway links connecting Rossland with points north, east and west. Access routes are generally well-maintained although access route minimum width and cul-de-sac turnarounds do not always meet FireSmart recommended guidelines. Fire Department responders do not report significant access challenges for residential fire response within the CoR fire protection area. Grades and load limitations are generally adequate for RFD's access needs.

The majority of the CoR's structural values at risk feature good access to both CoR Fire Department and WMB suppression resources. Access to and from CoR outlying residential areas (South Belt, Happy Valley and Blackjack residential areas) is via single road access routes and a wildfire could easily cut off access to or egress from these areas. Emergency vehicle access into these areas is a concern, which would be complicated when private vehicles are attempting to evacuate at the same time emergency vehicles are attempting to access. Timely evacuation of residents from these properties in the event of uncontrolled wildfire activity in these areas will be a priority for fire and emergency officials. South Belt and Blackjack residential areas are under the jurisdiction of the Regional District Kootenay Boundary (RDKB) with respect to emergency planning. Interagency cooperation with respect to wildfire emergency

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<sup>6</sup> COR Evacuation Map: [http://www.rossland.ca/sites/default/files/development-services\\_building-inspection\\_city-of-rossland-evacuation-map-overview\\_2011-03-25.pdf](http://www.rossland.ca/sites/default/files/development-services_building-inspection_city-of-rossland-evacuation-map-overview_2011-03-25.pdf)



planning will be important especially with respect to evacuation procedures and other response issues.

In the event of a wildfire, many deaths are the result of vehicle accidents or fire related deaths during evacuation. In general, evacuation from Rossland is relatively simple provided egress along the three main highways is possible. Though good access and egress is available, both in the majority of residential areas as well as from the city core with highways, loss of the highway in one or more directions could have significant impacts on evacuation speed and efficiency. For this reason, capacity to quickly clear traffic accidents should be identified. Local marshalling centres such as cleared fields should be identified for use in the event that evacuation routes become blocked, and communicated to the public prior to a fire.

Some farm properties in outlying residential areas maintain various livestock populations which will require evacuation. Transportation and care for animals should be identified prior to a wildfire event. In the case where livestock cannot be evacuated, safe zones in irrigated or plowed fields should be identified and livestock should be moved to these areas well in advance of the fire front.

The implementation of coordinated and complimentary emergency planning practices between local and regional levels is important. Taking a more unified approach could improve efficiency and create consistent regulation and messages related to interface fire issues and risk. As part of interagency cooperation, CoR fire and emergency response officials should meet with WMB, Provincial Emergency Program (PEP) and Regional District emergency planning representatives to review and update the wildfire evacuation plan on a regular basis.

The evacuation plan should include:

1. Identify evacuation routes (primary and secondary) for all areas of the City, particularly isolated areas (particularly where tourists unfamiliar with these areas might be travelling).
2. Map and identify safe zones, marshalling points, reception centre, and aerial evacuation locations.
3. Plan traffic control and accident management.
4. Identify resources required to implement evacuation plan.
5. Identify locations to which livestock can be evacuated.
6. Map potential locations of evacuation centres in adjacent communities, and where and how services would be provided to evacuees.
7. Identify volunteers or volunteer organizations that can assist during and/or after evacuation.
8. Create an education/communication strategy to deliver this information to residents.

It is important that the plan be reviewed and updated annually prior to the fire season (*i.e.* emergency plan key contacts).

#### **8.4.5** *FireSmart Hazard Assessments*

Fire triage is an important tool used by fire suppression crews to improve the potential for structures to survive a wildfire event. Triage assessments are dependent on five main factors which include: firefighter safety, structure designs and material, fuels around the structure, fire behaviour, and available resources.