



# Government of Alberta

## Community Planning Guide for Re-Entry after an Evacuation

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# Introduction

## Background

One of the key principles of the Alberta's Emergency Management System is that it is *“comprised of escalating responsibilities from the “bottom up” with the intent of resolving the emergency at the lowest possible level.”* While the Alberta Emergency Management Agency certainly respects this principle, the KPMG post incident assessment report into the 2016 Wood Buffalo Wildfire made the recommendation that the Province *“Build re-entry conditions and criteria into a guide that can be leveraged by local authorities.”* To meet this recommendation the Agency commenced guideline development in September 2017.

## Guide Development

A thorough review of available re-entry plans and documentation was undertaken highlighting key assumptions, differences in methodology, challenges, opportunities and general applicability. Lessons learned and best practices outlined in re-entry literature from other jurisdictions throughout Canada, United States and the United Kingdom were also researched.<sup>1</sup> Consultation took place between, Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) Field Operations, government ministries and communities. A Re-Entry workshop was held as part of the AEMA Stakeholder Summit 2017 to solicit input and feedback from emergency management partners. Simultaneous to other training being conducted, a field test was conducted in the Town of Coaldale to assess the efficacy and utility of the guide.

## Purpose

The purpose of this Re-entry Guide is to provide local authorities with a series of planning considerations that should be addressed as part of their Community Emergency Management Plan. These considerations should assist communities in developing their own re-entry plans to facilitate the safe return of residents to their homes once it is deemed safe to do so. It is not intended as a substitute for a community specific plan. Each community and every disaster will present its own specific set of circumstances and pre-written plans must be adjusted against the actual situation.

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<sup>1</sup> Literature researched is identified at the end of this guide

## Legislation

The Municipal Government Act (MGA) and Emergency Management Act (EMA) establish the province's legal basis and framework for managing emergencies.

The MGA is the legislative framework within which all municipalities and municipal entities across the Province of Alberta operate. Amendments to the MGA have been made through three bills passed by the legislature since 2015; some provisions of the act will come into force in phases, with some happening immediately and others becoming effective in January and April 2018. A copy of the MGA can be found at the link provided below and the extract which defines the purpose, powers and capacity of municipalities can be found at Annex A.

<http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/m26.pdf>

The EMA provides the legislative framework for local and provincial management of emergencies and disasters. A copy of the EMA can be found at the link provided below (printed copies are available from the Queens Printer). Annex B of this guide provides extracts of the EMA which relate specifically to evacuation and access control. To obtain a full understanding and perspective of the legislation it should be read in its entirety and in conjunction with the MGA and any applicable local Emergency Management bylaws.

<http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/E06P8.pdf>

Clarification on the contents of both the MGA and EMA can be obtained through Alberta Emergency Management Agency Field Officers.

Depending on the nature and the scope of the emergency, a number of regulations and acts could provide context for re-entry activities. A full listing can be found at the link provided below.

<http://www.qp.alberta.ca/570.cfm>

## Trigger for Re-Entry

While the trigger for re-entry will be different for each community and each type of disaster, it should occur when the Director of Emergency Management, in consultation with the Incident Commander, determines that it is safe to return. Generic plans for re-entry should be in place for review prior to an evacuation. The decision to re-enter may be based on information provided by a number of agencies including but not limited to:

- Elected Officials
- Chief Administrative Officer
- Director / Deputy Director of Emergency Management / Emergency Management Staff
- Local Emergency Social Services Staff
- Community and Regional Planners
- Law Enforcement, Fire/Rescue and Emergency Medical Services, Public Health and Safety Personnel
- Public Information Officer / Communications
- Public works/Engineering departments
- Multi-modal transportation providers
- Supporting social service agencies and volunteer organizations
- Neighbouring jurisdictions/First Nations
- Alberta Emergency Management Agency Field Officers
- School Board(s)
- Industry
- Utilities / Critical Infrastructure Stakeholders
- Health Authorities
- Environmental Authorities
- Special Interest Groups (eg corrections facilities, livestock producers)
- Regulatory bodies (eg Transport Canada)
- Provincial and Federal Partners
- SPCA or Animal Rescue Groups

## Communications

Throughout the re-entry process timely, accurate and consistent communication to residents is crucial. Local authorities should provide regular updates that are accurate, thorough and coordinated to ensure residents are informed and to dispel rumours. If available, use of TV, radio, social media, message boards and briefings at evacuation centres all play a part in keeping all affected parties informed. Printed literature in the form of brochures or handouts could also be produced to provide residents and businesses with information. The appointment of an information officer dedicated solely to this task will greatly assist in this process. Information to be communicated to communities should include but not be limited to:

- If homes have been destroyed or damaged the impacted home owners should be notified prior to any announcement of re-entry
- How and when re-entry will begin
- If a staged re-entry is required, and when will different groups be allowed to enter the evacuated area and reasons why others are excluded
- Transportation restrictions
- What the re-entry routes are and if control of these routes has been established
- Location of any Welcome Centres
- Safety considerations, such as how to obtain emergency assistance and the use of personal protective equipment
- Any limitations of services
- Guidance on re-entering homes. (specific information should be available pertaining to restoring of utilities, disposal of spoiled food, etc)

# Re-entry Planning

Planning for and re-entry into an area is likely to occur in three main stages:

## Pre Re-entry (Conditions Setting)

- Stage 1 - Damage Assessment
- Stage 2 - Restoration of Services

## Re-Entry

- Stage 3 - Community Re-entry

The timescale between stages will vary depending on a number of factors including:

- The size of the community,
- The type and complexity of the emergency
- Location of the community

## Stage 1 – Damage Assessment<sup>2</sup>

Stage 1 of Re-entry planning is Damage Assessment. During this stage access should be restricted to agencies and private service providers with key roles in damage assessment. It is the responsibility of each community to determine the minimum level of service required prior to community re-entry. To assist with the recovery phase of an emergency or disaster it is important to accurately document any damage at all stages of the re-entry procedures.

Initially, resources should be dedicated to providing detailed damage assessment and safety planning. Areas for consideration may include:

- Structures - A systematic approach should be introduced to assess all structures for safe access and a system implemented for easy identification of condition (For example red card for uninhabitable, green cards for habitable). Additionally, it may be helpful to differentiate between residential and commercial buildings
- Water and Wastewater Services - All water and wastewater services should be inspected in accordance with industry standards for damage and connectivity to structures. All source water intakes, water treatment plants, reservoirs, water distribution lines, sanitary lines, waste water treatment plants, as well as storm water collection and outfall must all be inspected, repaired and certified to safe conditions. The availability of water and whether it is potable must be known and shared to service providers entering the area at this stage
- Air Quality Conditions - Information about outdoor air quality, particularly when an active fire may still be present in the region, may be provided by Alberta Health, Alberta Environment & Parks or the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch. Smoke and other contaminants (e.g., oil and gas release) that may have impacted or caused a poor or hazardous outdoor air quality condition may also penetrate into buildings through active or passive intrusion. Service providers returning to buildings which may have been

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<sup>2</sup> Checklist for Stage 1 Planning Considerations can be found at Annex C.

subjected to poor air quality events should enter buildings with caution, or consider having them pre-inspected before re-entry depending on the reason for evacuation

- Gas and Electric - All gas and electric lines and facilities should be inspected by responsible utilities service providers and status established. Service must be restored prior to re-entry
- Access Routes - A hazard assessment of all transportation modes and associated infrastructure must take place
- Telecommunications - Voice and data lines, towers and stations must be restored.
- Accommodation / Food - Consideration should also be given to the availability of accommodation and food for contractors if required
- Consideration of where and how debris (solid or liquid) will be stored, transported and disposed of. Secondary hazards (i.e., intrusion of wildlife, infectious disease, proliferation of rodents, flies or other insects) are more likely if wastes are not considered and controlled early in planning



## Stage 2 – Restoration of Services<sup>3</sup>

Stage 2 of Re-entry is the restoration of services required in a community in order to enable safe, sustainable living to an acceptable level. It should be noted that this new level of services is not likely to be the same level services were BEFORE the evacuation. These necessities represent the bare minimum; full restoration will begin as soon as practicable. This list is not prioritized.

- Medical Facilities – the minimum level of health services required will need to be defined by Alberta Health Services
- Emergency Services (Fire, Police, Ambulance, 911)
- Water system - functional and able to deliver water; under a boil water advisory if necessary
- Sewage - collection and treatment system is functioning
- Garbage - collection and treatment system is functioning
- Storm water collection and discharge
- Gas and Electric - Restoration of gas and electric facilities
- Communications - Restoration of communications (voice and data)
- Lighting and traffic signals
- Public Works - Restoration of the public works operations centres, landfill, and waste collection program. The waste collection program should include a specific plan for disposal of decaying garbage white goods, electronics, large amounts of construction and vegetation debris and household hazardous waste
- Critical Retail - In this context, critical retail consists of a minimum number and types of grocery stores, pharmacies and gas stations that are required to support re-entry. Restoration of these businesses will be done under the control of their owners/managers and will include disposal of any spoiled product, any debris, or damage including spoiled foodstuff
- Banking - Facilities should be available for all residents to have access to banking and cash services
- Donation management - Capacity to accept and organize contributions
- Daycare/education facilities
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<sup>3</sup> Checklist for Points for Consideration for Stage 2 – Restoration of Services can be found at Annex D

## Stage 3 - Community Re-entry<sup>4</sup>

During Stage 3 considerations should be given to the size and demographics of the evacuated population. With larger scale re-entry plans it is considered a Best Practice to establish Welcome Centres. Welcome Centres could also act as a centralized facility for Non-Government Organizations and faith communities.

Information available at the Welcome Centre should include:

- Status of water systems, including quantity and safety of drinking water, ability to use wastewater and storm water systems, the location and access to waste disposal services
- Clean up procedures and the resources available to assist
- 'Clean-up Kits' could be made available for individuals or businesses returning to their properties (An example of the contents of a clean-up kit is shown at Annex F.)
- Psychosocial assistance that is available
- Health and Safety advice
- Insurance advice
- Communications access (Voice, data, internet)
- 'Returning to Your Home' guide provided by service providers or industry (eg Alberta Health Services)
- Where to get updates on weather conditions, outdoor air quality conditions, or flood/forecast information (if applicable)

It is important to note that not everyone will visit Welcome Centres; therefore it is key to ensure that all available information is duplicated on as many communication methods as available eg websites, radio, social media, printed literature and door hangers

Annex G is a list of contact information which may assist with the production of information packages. Please note that these links were correct at the time of production of this guide and are subject to amendment without advisement.

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<sup>4</sup> Checklist for Points for Consideration for Stage 3 – Community Re-entry can be found at Annex E.

## Conclusion

As noted previously, Alberta's Emergency Management System starts at the lowest level. While it is acknowledged that there is likely to be voluntary and spontaneous evacuations in advance of an ordered evacuation, re-entry needs to be planned by the local authority. To ensure the safety of Albertans, it is important to provide accurate, co-ordinated and timely communications throughout all phases of re-entry. Authorities should try to manage all affected individuals expectations regarding levels of services and the safety precautions to take when returning to damaged communities. It is important to balance the pressure and frustration of affected residents wanting to return to their homes and businesses while ensuring it is safe for them to do so. Authorities should also be mindful that any decisions they make are carefully guided by the legal framework.

While every emergency and disaster will have an element of uniqueness, every attempt to provide local authorities planning considerations for re-entry planning has been undertaken. Pre-planning is key. AEMA's Field Officers should be the initial GOA point of contact should local authorities require any assistance in pre-planning.

## Extract from the Municipal Government Act Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000 Chapter M-26 Current as of July 1, 2017

### Part 1

#### Purposes, Powers and Capacity of Municipalities

##### Municipal purposes

3 The purposes of a municipality are

- (a) to provide good government,
  - (a.1) to foster the well-being of the environment \*
- (b) to provide services, facilities or other things that, in the opinion of council, are necessary or desirable for all or a part of the municipality, and
- (c) to develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

\* Addition under 'An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government' 2017

## Extract from the emergency management act - revised statutes of Alberta 2000 chapter e-6.8 current as of December 11, 2013

### **Part 2**

#### **State of Emergency**

##### **Declaration of State of Emergency**

18(1) *The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, at any time when the Lieutenant Governor in Council is satisfied that an emergency exists or may exist, make an order for a declaration of a state of emergency relating to all or any part of Alberta.*

##### **Powers of Minister in emergency**

19(1) *On the making of the declaration and for the duration of the state of emergency, the Minister may do all acts and take all necessary proceedings including the following:*

- (a) put into operation an emergency plan or program;*
- (b) authorize or require a local authority to put into effect an emergency plan or program for the municipality;*
- (c) acquire or utilize any real or personal property considered necessary to prevent, combat or alleviate the effects of an emergency or disaster;*
- (d) authorize or require any qualified person to render aid of a type the person is qualified to provide;*
- (e) control or prohibit travel to or from any area of Alberta;*
- (f) provide for the restoration of essential facilities and the distribution of essential supplies and provide, maintain and co-ordinate emergency medical, welfare and other essential services in any part of Alberta;*
- (g) cause the evacuation of persons and the removal of livestock and personal property from any area of Alberta that is or may be affected by a disaster and make arrangements for the adequate care and protection of those persons or livestock and of the personal property;*

##### **Termination of state of emergency**

20(1) *When, in the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, an emergency no longer exists in an area in relation to which a declaration of a state of emergency was made, the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall make an order terminating the declaration of a state of emergency in respect of that area.*

*(2) Immediately after an order is made under subsection (1), the Minister shall cause the details*

*of the termination to be published by any means of communication that the Minister considers is most likely to make known to the majority of the population of the area affected the contents of the termination order.*

### ***Declaration of state of local emergency***

*21(1) A local authority may, at any time when it is satisfied that an emergency exists or may exist in its municipality, by resolution or, in the case of the Minister responsible for the Municipal Government Act, the Minister responsible for the Special Areas Act or a park superintendent of a national park, by order, make a declaration of a state of local emergency relating to all or any part of the municipality.*

*(2) A declaration of a state of local emergency under subsection (1) must identify the nature of the emergency and the area of the municipality in which it exists.*

*3) Immediately after the making of a resolution for a declaration of a state of local emergency, the local authority shall cause the details of the declaration to be published by any means of communication that it considers is most likely to make known to the population of the area of the municipality affected the contents of the declaration.*

### ***Cancellation of declaration of state of local emergency***

*22(1) The local authority shall forthwith on making a declaration of a state of local emergency forward a copy of the declaration to the Minister.*

*(2) The Minister may cancel the declaration of a state*

*(3) A declaration of a state of local emergency ceases to be of any force or effect on the making of an order for a state of emergency by the Lieutenant Governor in Council relating to the same area of the municipality.*

*(4) A declaration of a state of local emergency lapses 7 days after its making by the local authority unless it is earlier cancelled by the*

## Considerations for Stage 1 – Damage Assessment

Service	Point of Contact and telephone #/email	Additional Information
Structural assessments		
Assessment of Hazardous Material		
Utilities - Gas		
Utilities - Electric		
Utilities - Water		
Utilities - Sewage		
Access to all transportation modes		
Cellular / landline Communications infrastructure		
Air Quality Condition		
Communications Plan		
Control of entry identified		
Storm Water Management Systems		
Means of which access is authorized into restricted areas		

## Considerations for Stage 2 – Restoration of Services

Service	Point of Contact and telephone #/email	Additional Information
Health Services		
Emergency Services		
Utilities - gas		
Utilities - electric		
Utilities - water		
Utilities - sewage		
Public Health inspectors		
Critical retail		
Banking		
Ability to accept/organize contributions/donations		
Daycare/educational facilities		
Other		



## Considerations for Stage 3 – Community Re-entry

Service	Point of Contact and telephone #/email	Additional Information
Welcome Centre established		
Information Packs available		
Key NGO's available		
Information on condition of homes available		
Insurance Information/personnel available		
Available communications (computer internet access)		
Faith communities available		
Mental Health Services available		
Obtain 'returning home' information sheets from relevant departments/industry. (AHS, Fortis etc) Including what to do checklists		
Information on weather, air or water conditions as applicable		
Other		

## Suggested Contents for “Clean up Kit”

5 Litre Bucket

Mop

Long handled broom

Hand brush

Cleaning fluid/detergent

Sponges

Heavy duty garbage bags

Disposable Gloves

Work gloves

Dust particulate masks

Safety Glasses

Any other equipment deemed necessary or useful to the specific incident

## Contact Information

### Alberta Health Services

Telephone: Health Link – 811  
Website: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/>  
Guides: Returning to Your Home Guide  
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-returning-to-your-home.pdf>

### ATCO Gas

Telephone: ATCO Gas Emergency Line 1-800-511-3447  
Website: <http://www.atcogas.com/>  
Guides: Safety in an emergency and safety sheets - <http://www.atcogas.com/Safety/In-an-Emergency/>

### ATCO Electricity

Telephone: ATCO Electricity 1-800-668-2248  
Website: <http://www.atcoelectric.com/>  
Guides: Power Outage Map - <http://www.atcoelectric.com/Safety/Power-Outages/Outage-Map>

### Fortis Alberta

Telephone: 1-866-717-3113  
Website: <http://www.fortisalberta.com/>  
Guides: Municipalities Facility Map - <http://www.fortisalberta.com/for-business-industry/municipalities>  
Safety Information - <http://www.fortisalberta.com/Safety>

### Shaw

Telephone: 1-888-554-7827  
Website: <http://www.shawdirect.ca/english/support/>

### Telus

Telephone: 1-866-558-2273  
Website: <https://www.telus.com/en/ab/support>

### Insurance Board of Canada

Telephone: 1-844-227-5422  
Website: <http://www.ibc.ca>

## Literature Review

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South Carolina, *Re-Entry Plan Horry County South Carolina (2006)* Available at [https://www.horrycounty.org/Portals/0/Docs/EMD/Plans/Section\\_6/6-8%20Re-Entry%20Annex.pdf](https://www.horrycounty.org/Portals/0/Docs/EMD/Plans/Section_6/6-8%20Re-Entry%20Annex.pdf) (accessed 21 Jan 2018)

Washington State *Emergency Management Division Post Disaster Re-Entry Framework* Available at [https://mil.wa.gov/uploads/pdf/PLANS/re-entry-planning-framework-cemp\\_esf5-annex\\_appendix-1.pdf](https://mil.wa.gov/uploads/pdf/PLANS/re-entry-planning-framework-cemp_esf5-annex_appendix-1.pdf) (accessed 21 Jan 2018)

In the event of an Emergency, the Government of Alberta makes every effort to ensure that Albertans are kept up-to-date on the latest activities and updates related to the Emergencies. In doing so, we go to great length to ensure the accuracy of the information provided. However, it must be noted that there may be instances where information is not as current as it can possibly be. The Material contained in this document is provided "as is" without warranties or conditions of any kind either expressed or implied. To the fullest extent possible under applicable law, the Government of Alberta disclaims all warranties and conditions, expressed or implied, including but not limited to, implied warranties or conditions of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose, non-infringement or other violation of rights. The Government of Alberta does not warrant or make any other representations regarding the use, accuracy, timelines, applicability, performance, security, availability or reliability of this document, or the results from the use of this document, or otherwise respecting the Material contained within this document. This document was produced for information purposes. The user of this information is solely responsible for assessing and determining whether the information is appropriate for their own use. The Government of Alberta does not accept any liability whatsoever for any deficiency, error, omission in any statement or information contained in or in any way related to the use of this document.