



Ministry of
Emergency Management
and Climate Readiness

Emergency Support Services

Program guide
2025



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Emergency Support Services overview

Emergency Support Services (ESS) is an emergency response program delivered by Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities to meet the basic needs of British Columbians affected by disasters.

ESS provides short-term support in a compassionate manner following disasters ranging from a single house fire to large evacuations caused by emergencies like wildfires and floods.

In large-scale emergencies, ESS may be supported by provincial resources.

ESS support enables people to re-establish themselves as quickly as possible after an emergency or disaster.

Legislation, policy and procedures

Under the [Emergency and Disaster Management Act \(EDMA\)](#) s.52(3)(a), a local authority is responsible for preparing an emergency management plan that includes a plan for the evacuation and care of individuals and animals in the area within the jurisdiction of the local authority. ESS is a locally managed program under the Public Safety Lifeline Volunteer (PSLV) program.

Indigenous governing bodies are supported in their emergency management role through a service agreement between EMCR and [Indigenous Services Canada \(ISC\)](#). EMCR supports Indigenous governing bodies in their efforts to stand up emergency management and evacuee care programs, including ESS.

EMCR's [Evacuee Living Assistance Policy \(Policy 5.03\)](#) supports local authorities in fulfilling their legislated mandate. Policy 5.03 provides definitions for key terms, sets program eligibility and defines evacuee responsibilities. This ESS Program Guide (the program guide) supports Policy 5.03 by providing further guidance and information on the ESS program.

This program guide is considered a living document and will continue to be updated to reflect the evolution of ESS service delivery and wise practice.

Further operational procedures are found on the [ESS Resource Hub](#). The ESS Resource Hub is a new centralized website designed to support ESS teams across British Columbia, particularly those using the Evacuee Registration and Assistance (ERA) tool. It provides quick access to essential guides, training materials, and operational resources, ensuring responders have the tools they need to deliver effective emergency assistance. The hub will serve as a key resource for ERA users, offering targeted support and up-to-date guidance.

Together, these policies and procedures form the framework under which ESS operates. Information underlined throughout the program guide is hyperlinked text in the digital

version of this guide. Most links are expanded upon in [Appendix C](#) for the benefit of the printed version. There are seven appendices in all:

- Appendix A – Glossary
- Appendix B – Acronyms
- Appendix C – Links to resources
- Appendix D – Response to apartment fires
- Appendix E – Virtual work environments
- Appendix F – Evacuee medication
- Appendix G – Provincial service delivery in large-scale evacuations

Commitment to improving cultural safety

On May 29, 2019, the First Nations Health Authority and EMCR signed a letter of understanding and [Declaration of Commitment to Cultural Safety and Humility in Emergency Management Services for First Nations People in B.C.](#) This program guide affirms the Province's commitment to continually strive to build capacity to offer culturally safe and inclusive ESS, including information policies and practices like the [Cultural Activity Location Supports](#) and [First Nation Community/Community Navigator policies](#).

Types of support

Residents of B.C. are encouraged to prepare themselves for potential emergencies. Emergency preparedness information can be found through [PreparedBC](#). When evacuated, supports provided by friends, family and insurance should be used before ESS is considered. ESS should only be used when other resources are unavailable or inaccessible.

ESS provides short-term temporary supports for individuals and families affected by emergencies or disasters so they can begin to plan their next steps and facilitate their recovery. The core categories of support include:

- Food (groceries or restaurant meals)
- Clothing
- Lodging (commercial accommodation, group lodging or support via the shelter allowance)
- Incidentals
- Transportation

Local ESS teams and the provincial ESS program have relationships with a broad range of emergency response organizations specializing in disaster support. Based on these relationships, ESS teams may facilitate access to a range of supports to ensure evacuee needs are met. These supports may be delivered on site, at a reception centre or group lodging facility or provided by a provincial or local support organization. These may include:

- Family reunification

- Social-emotional support
- Cultural support
- Spiritual support
- Volunteer services
- Child activity areas
- Information services (additional information is provided by [EmergencyInfoBC](#) during large scale emergencies)

In large-scale emergencies, additional access pathways may be enabled by the Province to reduce pressure and congestion at in person reception centres. Additional supports may include:

- Online self-service pathway that may be activated in large-scale evacuations. Evacuees would access this pathway in the ERA tool.
- Call centre: the BC Evacuee Helpline that can help evacuees access the emergency supports they need by phone during large-scale evacuations and offer general information to the public year-round. The evacuee helpline has been established by the Ministry of Citizens' Services in partnership with EMCR.

Additional information on provincial service delivery options can be found in [Appendix G](#).

Support timelines

ESS is typically provided for a period of up to 72 hours (for those who are eligible and unable to access other resources). During this period, evacuees need to plan their next steps and begin their transition to recovery by:

- Contacting their insurance providers for coverage.
- Contacting family, friends and community for support.
- Contacting their Indigenous governing body or local authority for next steps and support options.
- Accessing community service organizations such as the [BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres](#), [First Nations Health Authority](#), [Canadian Red Cross](#) or the [Salvation Army](#) for longer term support.

In some cases, the 72-hour period is not enough for an evacuee to begin their recovery process, or the emergency may be ongoing (like an evacuation order due to a wildfire). Extensions for ESS should not exceed three months and require significant justification after 10 days.

As the ESS program is designed to support the immediate needs of evacuees, extensions will only be granted in cases where an unmet need can be clearly identified. Evacuees should be provided with clear information on ESS expiry dates. EMCR approval is required for extensions. More information can be found in the [exceptions and extensions](#) section.

Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities may provide supports beyond the scope or timespan of the ESS program as they consider appropriate. The Indigenous governing body and local authority bear the costs of these additional supports.

ESS in the B.C. emergency management structure

ESS is organized under the [British Columbia Emergency Management System \(BCEMS\)](#) and follows an incident command system (ICS) approach to response. Trained, often volunteer, responders deliver the core function of ESS. To deliver inclusive, culturally safe and co-ordinated supports to evacuees, ESS teams are supported by several different emergency management levels, outlined below.

Indigenous governing body and local authority level

Under EDMA, local authorities in B.C. are required to plan for and manage emergency response operations within their own jurisdiction. ESS teams are a part of Indigenous governing body and local authority emergency management programs, sometimes under the direction of the local emergency program coordinator (EPC) or equivalent.

EPC is used throughout this document for simplicity. It is recognized that Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities may have EPC equivalent roles and structures in place to plan for and respond to emergencies.

The EPC may appoint an ESS Director (ESSD) and delegate certain responsibilities to them.

EMCR has a service agreement with ISC to provide emergency management support to Indigenous communities. The agreement ensures:

- EMCR equitably supports all community emergency programs.
- Access to training opportunities and provincial support are available to all Indigenous communities.

Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities are encouraged to work together with neighboring communities to integrate planning, preparedness, and response activities.

Though ESS is designed as a locally managed, volunteer model, some Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities contract the delivery of the ESS program to third-party organizations or utilize staff. It is recommended practice to contact the relevant [EMCR regional office](#) if a contracted ESS model is being considered.

Considerations related to contracting an ESS program to a third-party include:

- The cost of contracting an ESS program is borne by the Indigenous governing body or local authority and is not reimbursable.
- The contracted third-party ESS provider has received cultural safety and humility training or has a strong understanding of the historical contexts of Indigenous peoples in B.C.
- Public Safety Lifeline Volunteer (PSLV) program ESS volunteers are reimbursed at the rates prescribed under the PSLV program.
- Liability and reimbursement impacts may result if contractors exceed the scope and parameters of the provincial ESS program.
- To ensure equitable and timely service, the contractor must use only approved ESS forms or the ERA tool, procedures and local suppliers.
- The local authority retains its legislated responsibility. This cannot be delegated to the contractor.

Preparedness phase

The EPC or equivalent holds overall responsibility for the ESS program within their jurisdiction. The EPC or equivalent may appoint an ESS Director (ESSD) or equivalent and delegate responsibilities. The ESSD or equivalent is often an integral part of the emergency planning committee. EPC and ESSD (or their equivalents) responsibilities include:

- Recruit, train and plan exercises for ESS responders.
- Develop callout procedures and prepare potential reception centres and group lodging facilities for use.
- Create an ESS plan, which forms part of the Indigenous governing body or local authority's overall emergency plan.
- Develop and maintain relationships with support organizations, including suppliers, non-government organizations and community organizations.
- Prepare adequately for supports to vulnerable populations.
- Encourage public preparedness by recommending personal or family preparedness and recovery plans, including resources from the [Emergency Management in B.C.](#) site.
- Work with EMCR to develop program capacity.

Preparedness considerations for EPCs and ESSDs (or their equivalents):

- ESS responders must be registered as PSLVs with their Indigenous governing body or local authority and EMCR to ensure they have access to coverage listed below.
- Once registered, responders may apply to receive a PSLV ID card.
- Eligibility for workers' compensation coverage, liability protection and expense reimbursement benefits require all responders be registered for the specific operational or training number in which they are involved.

Training

The following are training course recommendations for ESS responders:

- Introduction to ESS
- Registration and Referrals
- Introduction to Reception Centres
- Introduction to Group Lodging
- Evacuee Registration and Supports (EMRG-1635 required prior to using ERA)

A full list of courses available can be found on the [ESS Training page](#).

Updates have been made to ESS training materials to reflect cultural safety. Additional cultural safety training materials and resources can be accessed through [the B.C. Government Indigenous Relations Behavioural Competencies](#).

Additionally, EMCR and the First Nations Health Authority jointly offer cultural safety and humility training focused on providing more culturally safe and trauma informed evacuee care in reception centres; these training dates are announced through the regional offices to ESS teams. Webinars related to cultural safety and emergency management can be viewed through the [Justice Institute of B.C. and EMCR's ESS Community 2 Community webinar series recordings](#).

Response phase

The EPC or equivalent is responsible for operations during response. During larger activations, the EPC or equivalent may fill the emergency operations centre (EOC) director position while the appointed ESSD or equivalent generally fills the ESS branch coordinator function at the EOC. The EPC or equivalent is responsible to:

- Activate the ESS plan and provide supports as appropriate.
- Co-ordinate response activities, including requesting additional support as required.
- Lead a culturally safe operation.
- Plan for a transition to recovery.
- Ensure a responsible demobilization.

Key response considerations include:

- Only engage ESS responders to perform tasks within the scope of their qualifications, training and experience.
- Always deploy ESS responders in pairs for health and safety reasons.
- Ensure breaks and supportive health measures are in place to protect the responders and evacuees.

More detailed information regarding typical ESS operations and functions is available through the [Group Lodging Operational Guidelines](#) [ESS Resource Hub](#).

EMCR regional level

EMCR maintains an office in each of the six [EMCR regions](#). Regional staff include Director, Regional Response, Regional Response Officers, Emergency Management Technicians, ESS Regional Planning Officers and Regional Office Administrators.

Regional staff are responsible for providing support for a full spectrum of emergency management activities.

Regional offices maintain a 24/7 duty position called a Regional Response Officers (RRO). The RRO is the contact point for any approvals related to overages and expenditures.

Preparedness phase

Regional staff may support ESS by:

- Acting as a contact point for EPCs or equivalent, providing expert advice on regional issues and EMCR policy, processes and resources.
- Offering support and advice to communities about their emergency program planning, preparedness and recovery activities.
- Coordinating the integration of key regional partners or interest holders.
- Advising and supporting the development of ESS teams and plans.
- Attending or supporting conferences, working groups and ESS events.
- Hosting seasonal readiness information sessions.
- Resourcing, capacity and capability building within Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities.
- Supporting the development of mutual aid or host community agreements.

Response phase

Regional staff may support ESS response by:

- Providing approvals, advice and support to EPCs and ESSDs or their equivalents.
- Activating a provincial regional emergency operations centre (PREOC) to support larger emergencies.
- Staffing an ESS branch in the operations section of the PREOC.

EMCR provincial level

EMCR headquarters (HQ) provides policy, training, operations, administration and financial support to a full spectrum of emergency management activities. EMCR HQ is responsible for the overall strategy to build ESS capacity across the province.

ESS staff in HQ provide policy advice, direction and coordinate response in large events, including:

- EMCR finance processes all invoices generated by referrals from suppliers and response claims, including volunteer reimbursements.
- The provincial duty manager (PDM) maintains awareness of larger provincial events.
- The Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) is EMCR's 24/7 office and the source of all task numbers (1-800-663-3456).
- The ESS call centre (1-800-585-9559) can provide information to suppliers and support ESS teams with ERA technical support.

Preparedness phase

EMCR HQ may support ESS by:

- Developing policy and procedural direction.
- Maintaining the ESS website.
- Hosting workshops and webinars.
- Providing resources to the regional offices to support the ESS program.
- Administering the ESS training program.
- Facilitating access to funded training in coordination with contracted training and exercise partners.
- Maintaining relationships with a broad array of support organizations.
- Developing integrated provincial response plans and preparing provincial level resources that may be enabled for large scale emergencies.

Response phase

EMCR HQ may support ESS by:

- Collecting and logging information and distributing task numbers through the emergency coordination centre (ECC).
- Providing decision making advice, support, resources and approvals to the RROs, PDMs and activated PREOCs.
- Activating the provincial emergency operations centre (PECC) to support larger activations.
- Staffing an ESS branch in the operations section of the PECC.
- Deploying available ESS responders upon request.
- Supporting the administration of ESS finance, including identification and follow up of discrepancies.
- Working to enable provincial level resources (online self-service pathway in the ERA tool, BC Evacuee Helpline support to ESS) during large-scale emergencies when necessary to ensure timely access to ESS.
- Working with Ministry of Citizens' Services to offer additional supports for in-person reception centres and communities when necessary (Service BC staff deployment to reception centres, when requested by communities - sharing community information and actions via Service BC SMS text messaging to evacuees registered in ERA).

Figure 1. Emergency management structure for ESS teams, EMCR and Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities across provincial, regional and local levels.

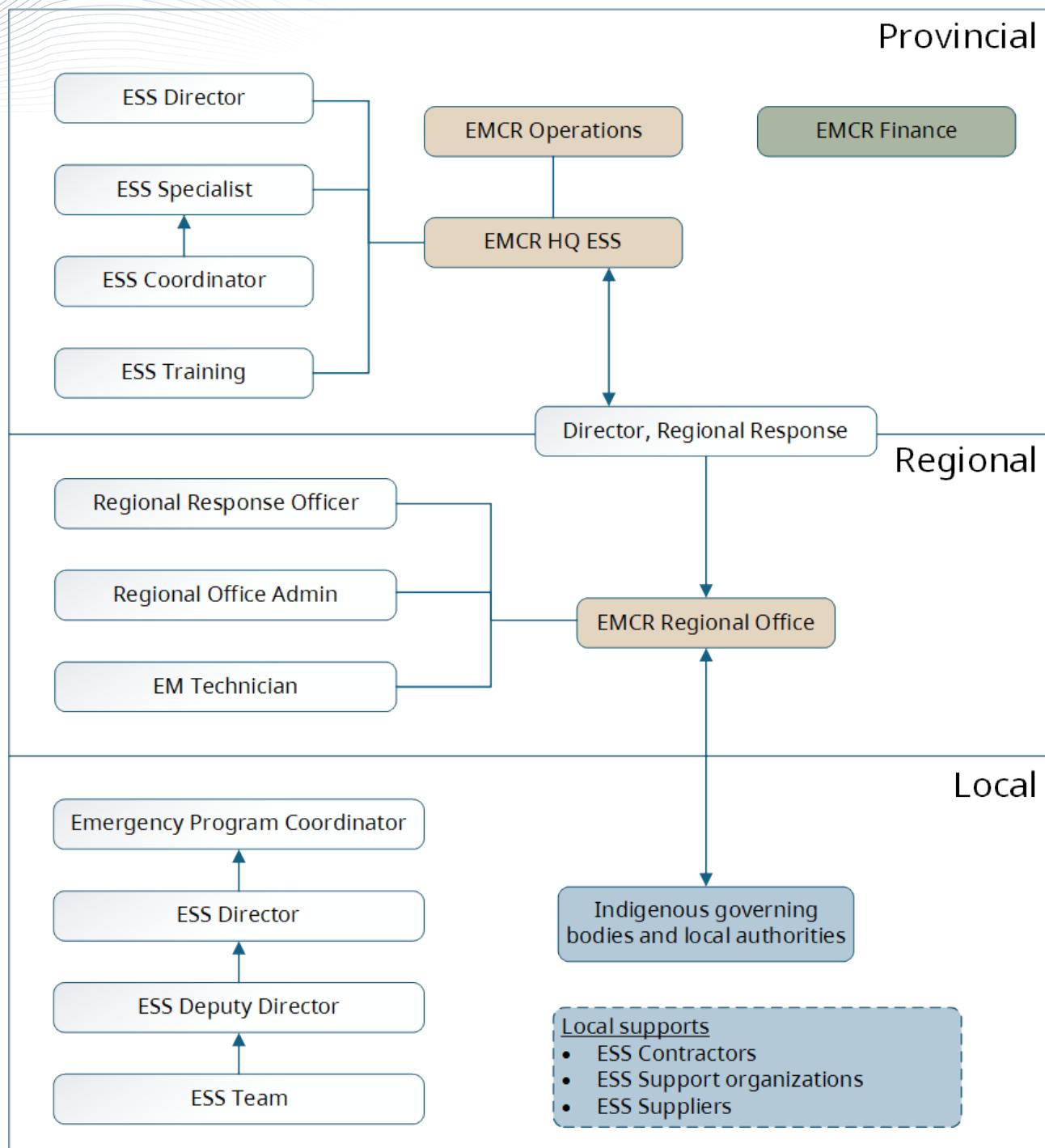
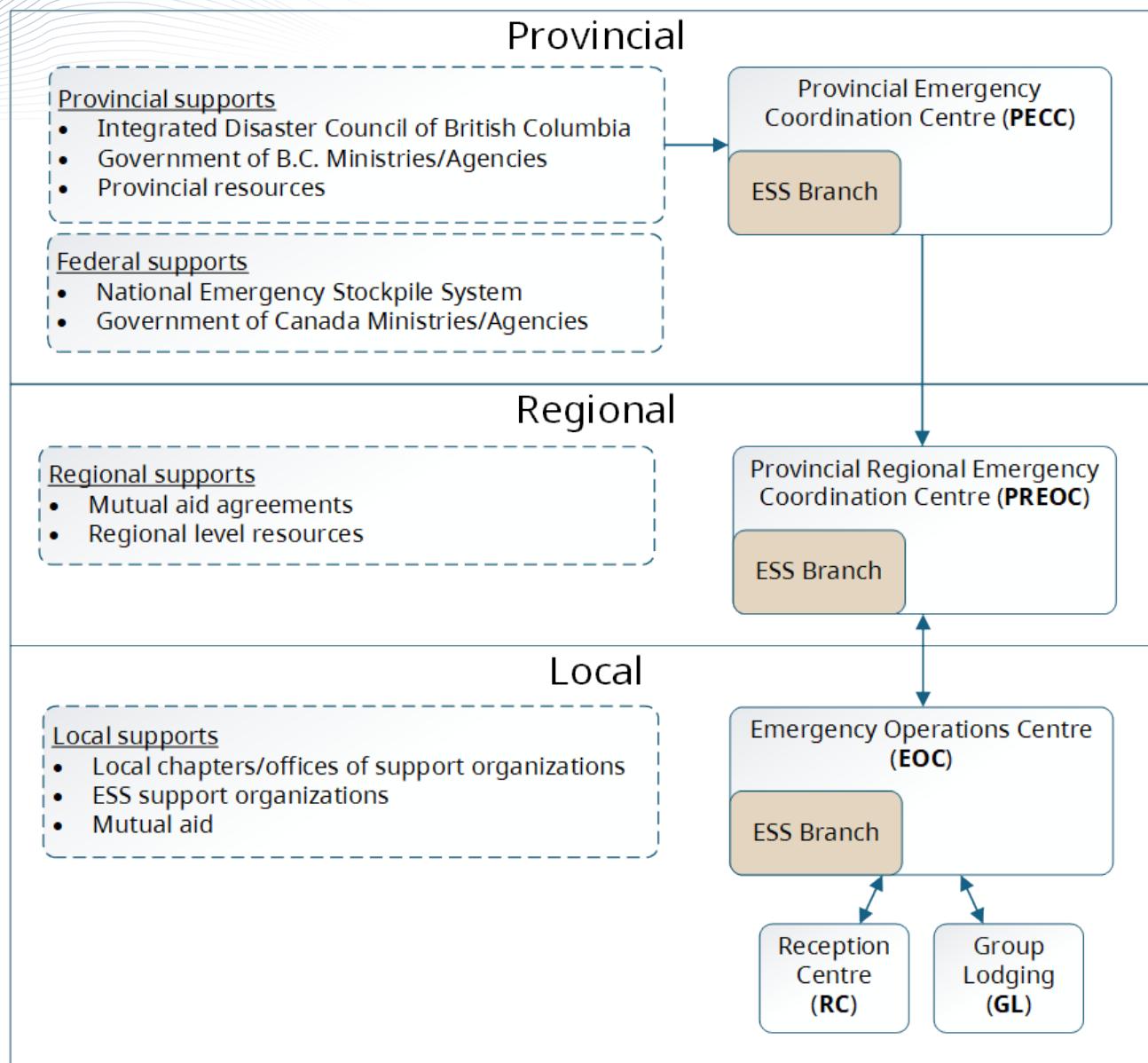


Figure 2. Response structure of EMCR and Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities across provincial, regional and local levels.



ESS response process

Concept of operations

This section provides an overview of ESS operations to promote general understanding of program operations and role awareness. It does not apply to every situation or ESS program structure.

1. Treaty Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities are responsible for planning and managing emergency response and recovery operations within their own jurisdiction. This responsibility involves the appointment of an EPC or equivalent and the creation of an emergency program, including an emergency plan and ESS team. The emergency plan should contain a detailed ESS plan outlining callout procedures, key personnel and the potential locations of reception centres and group lodging sites, as well as alternatives to meet unique circumstances.
2. When an emergency event occurs, Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities activate their ESS plan and form an appropriate response structure to manage the impacts and deliver ESS. Smaller events may be responded to at the roadside. Larger events may require the opening of a reception centre and group lodging facility as well as an EOC. Where jurisdiction overlaps, a wise practice is to provide linkage to each EOC through liaison roles.
3. When an Indigenous governing body or local authority is no longer able to effectively respond to an event due to the event size or complexity, support may be sought through mutual aid from neighbouring jurisdictions. Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities should consider integrated planning for ESS preparedness and response on a regional basis.
4. When mutual aid resources are unavailable or are not sufficient to meet the demand for ESS, the EPC or EOC (or their equivalents) may request provincial ESS assistance. Requests should be directed to the RRO or the PREOC, if activated. Requests for the self-service function can be made through the ECC.
5. Planning for the transition to recovery should be initiated as soon as the ESS response begins. The ESS program is intended to support evacuees in their immediate needs during the initial response phase of an emergency event. The recovery process is distinct from ESS and requires appropriate resources to ensure a successful transition.

For more information on the transition to recovery, see [Step 4 of the ESS response guidelines section](#).

ESS activation levels

ESS activation levels are distinguished by impact and the type of ESS resources needed.

Level one: A localized event that can be managed using minimal ESS resources (e.g. single house fire).

Level two: An event that requires the full use of an Indigenous governing body or local authority's ESS resources. A Level two event might include the activation of a reception centre and/or an EOC (e.g. fire in an apartment complex).

Level three: An emergency that exceeds an Indigenous governing body or local authority's capacity to respond and requires assistance or mutual aid from neighbouring jurisdictions and/or the Province (e.g. wildfire that causes an entire community to evacuate).

Task number

Task numbers confirm the application of [EDMA](#) to an emergency and provide a method for tracking approved expenditures. Task numbers start with the last two digits of the current year ex. 25-xxxxxx. If a local EOC does not need to activate, requests may be submitted using the task number for the individual incident.

Task numbers are an important financial control measure for every type of ESS support. In addition, the task number provides public safety lifeline volunteers with access to:

- PSLV liability coverage
- Replacement costs for materials both lost and damaged
- Reimbursement of expenses for volunteers
- Coverage for other costs (with EMCR's approval)
- Proceed with registration and referrals in ERA

ESS responders attending an event need to know the task number and must sign in on a task registration form before beginning work. When physical signatures are not possible (e.g. while working remotely), it is still required to sign in/out under a task number. An email with the task number to the ESS director/team lead is a recommended practice to document the start and end time of each shift.

Task numbers are a crucial component of any ESS response. To receive a task number, contact the ECC 24/7 at 1-800-663-3456.

Activation procedures

The following procedures are recommended when an emergency forces people from their homes and the Indigenous governing body or local authority activates its ESS plan. While

these procedures are considered wise practice, they can be adapted as needed. It is recognized that not all teams have the same capacity or will use the terminology outlined below. Remote response may be appropriate for some events (see [Appendix E - Virtual Work Environments](#)).

Note on delegation: These procedures refer to the EPC or equivalent as responsible for activating and carrying out the ESS plan. While the EPC or equivalent is ultimately responsible for these activities, it is recommended they delegate to an ESSD or equivalent. The ESSD or equivalent may assign further positions to members in the team. ESS responders calling in to the ECC to receive a task number are representatives of the EPC and their Indigenous governing body or local authority.

Level one ESS response

- A first responder (e.g. fire, police) notifies the EPC, ESSD or designate that an event has occurred or is ongoing.
- The EPC, ESSD or designate activates the ESS plan and contacts the ECC at 1-800- 663-3456 to pass on event information and receive a task number.
- Upon receipt of the task number, ESS attends the site of the emergency, an alternative location or attends virtually and carries out the registration and referral process.
- Local authorities and/or Indigenous governing bodies must adhere to the ESS Level One Response Activation Checklist.

Level two or three response

- First responder notifies the EPC or ESSD that an event has occurred.
- The EPC or ESSD activates the ESS plan and contacts the ECC at 1-800-663-3456 to pass on event information and receive a task number.
- If the EOC is activated, the EPC identifies an ESS branch coordinator. This is normally the ESSD.
- The ESS team may be required to open a reception centre (RC) and/or group lodging (GL) facility. The RC/GL managers report to the ESS branch in the EOC. ESS carries out the registration and referral process.
- The ESS branch coordinator in the EOC supports the ESS site operations.
- The EOC may request support from the Province via the RRO or the PREOC if activated. Requests for the online self-service should be sent to the provincial duty manager (PDM).

If unable to contact the community EPC

- First responder may contact the ECC directly and request activation of ESS if not already initiated by local dispatchers.
- The ECC will initiate a callout until a representative is contacted who can activate the ESS response plan. If no contact can be identified the ECC will advise the RRO.

Community navigators / First Nation community navigators – Policy 2.14

Policy 2.14 Community Navigators and First Nations Community Navigators support evacuees who have historically, or currently experience discrimination, cultural or social barriers when accessing Emergency Support Services. Their role is to help ensure evacuees can navigate ESS safely, respectfully and effectively.

First Nations community navigators

A First Nation community navigator is determined at the discretion of the impacted community during an emergency to support Indigenous evacuees who may experience additional barriers accessing ESS.

Community navigators

Community navigators may support evacuees from any community who face unique or complex barriers navigating ESS.

The community navigator can provide additional support and guidance to help people and communities with these complex or unique needs following an emergency event.

Duties may include, but are not limited to:

- Communicating specific community needs or concerns to the host community with the intent to prepare for receiving evacuees.
- Assisting individuals to create a profile in the Evacuee Registration and Assistance tool and answering questions regarding any support administered.
- Preparing Elders and vulnerable evacuees for evacuation.
- Co-ordinating support agencies following an evacuation event.
- Undertaking responsibility for tasks typically assigned to greeters.
- Providing services in multiple locations, such as reception centres, emergency operation centres, lodging facilities and food service locations.
- Supporting community members through transition to recovery. This can include case management and assisting the community recovery branch.

Cultural activity location support – Policy 2.15

Policy 2.15 - Cultural Activity Locations Support (CALS) originated out of the recognition that First Nations Peoples' cultures, languages and spiritual beliefs play a vital role in their wellbeing. Culturally sensitive evacuee care is a crucial component of meeting the needs of First Nations experiencing displacement through culturally appropriate, trauma-informed services.

The application of CALS and associated supports are now available to all impacted communities, ensuring equitable access to health, wellness and cultural services during emergencies, as defined by the [Emergency and Disaster Management Act](#).

Cultural activities and services may be offered and/or practiced within, or close to Emergency Support Services reception centres, group lodging facilities, or commercial lodging. Some communities may prefer to have a separate designated gathering space(s) where cultural activities and supports can be provided.

CALS may be applied when:

- Evacuated individuals or communities require a culturally appropriate space for wellness, healing, or ceremony.
- There is a need for culturally safe services close to lodging, reception centres, or group accommodation.
- A community identifies that a separate gathering space is necessary to safely carry out cultural activities.

CALS can be used for any impacted community when culturally sensitive support is required.

Wise practices

The following wise practices are intended to support cultural humility and cultural safety in the delivery of ESS. These practices are supported by research and after-action reports specific to the Province of British Columbia.

- Recruit and support ESS responders that reflect the diversity of the people and cultures that make up of the communities served, including Indigenous people, youth and language groups.
- Integrate cultural safety and humility training into monthly ESS team meetings. Include a write-up on the Indigenous history of the local area that can be shared with all responders and explore ways to learn about and develop relationships with cultural communities and language groups.
- Engage Indigenous leaders in all decisions that might impact their communities.
- Facilitate Indigenous governing bodies creating host community agreements with neighbouring communities to access facilities for CALS such as longhouses, big houses, nation-owned buildings and friendship centres.

Language services

Service BC provides interpretation services over the phone in more than 220 languages. Evacuees requiring access to ESS can receive support from the BC Evacuee Helpline in the language of their choice at 1-800-387-4258. The helpline also offers accessibility supports including assistance for persons with hearing or speech disabilities.

Support for evacuee translation is also available through the VictimLinkBC program. Call or text 1-800-563-0808 (available province wide and in the Yukon 24/7).

Services for the deaf and hearing-impaired are also available through the VictimLinkBC program. Call 604-875-0885 (available province wide 24/7). Email 211-VictimLinkBC@uwbc.ca

Provincial/regional ESS support

At times, local resources may be beyond their capacity and require additional support.

Mutual aid

If an Indigenous governing body or local authority finds they are unable to manage the ESS response with their own resources, mutual aid from neighbouring jurisdictions needs to be accessed as a first step. The ECC must be notified if mutual aid is requested. The Indigenous governing body or local authority providing mutual aid must obtain a task number from the ECC if they are a host community.

Provincial resources

When mutual aid resources are insufficient, assistance may be requested from the Province via a Resource Request (RR) to the regional response officer or an activated PREOC. Resources that can be requested via a RR include:

- Service BC support: BC Services Card authentication support which may include deployment of staff and technology to reception centres, SMS text messaging to evacuees registered in the ERA tool (to share community information) and BC Evacuee Helpline to provide general evacuation information and ESS supports (when activated to do so).
- EMCR ESS staff or staff from other emergency management programs.
- Other community ESS responders or ESS supporting organizations.

These resources may be requested to provide operational mentorship, just-in-time training, advice and support to ESS directors/emergency program coordinators (EPCs), relief shift coverage and surge support.

When authorization is granted, the Province will provide the coordination for the deployment of these supports.

The EPC or designate (e.g. ESS branch coordinator at the EOC) is responsible for consultation with reception centre and group lodging managers to determine the need for resources.

Requests should be submitted in the form of a Resource Request (RR). The following should be considered when submitting an RR:

- RRs should describe a need.
- RRs need to be detailed, realistic, prioritized and time based.

- RRs must be approved by the EPC/EOC Director.
- RRs are sent to the RRO or activated PREOC.

Resource Requests should describe a need in addition to a suggested solution. Description of the need, or the problem to be solved, helps the recipient quickly identify alternative solutions if the requested resource is unavailable. This enables a more productive, supportive partnership.

When requesting human resource supports, it is important to recognize that responders who deploy sometimes do so at great personal expense, affecting their work and personal lives to help their fellow British Columbians. Every effort should be taken to ensure those deployed have a safe, enjoyable experience and are recognized for their time and energy.

Provincial resources in large-scale evacuations (BC Evacuee Helpline and ESS online self-service registration)

Multiple pathways to access ESS supports are necessary during large-scale evacuations to meet evacuee needs in a timely and flexible way, including in-person support, online services and access by phone. Additional pathways to ESS can:

- Create more surge capacity and reduce congestion at reception centres, enabling more timely access to supports for evacuees.
- Allow reception centres to support those evacuees who prefer or need in-person support.
- Supplement existing virtual and remote mutual aid support to evacuees.

BC Evacuee Helpline

BC Evacuee Helpline (1-800-387-4258) is available year-round to share basic information with the public about ESS and emergency events (evacuation orders and alerts), assist with BC Services Card App authentication and help with ERA profile creation.

During large-scale emergencies, the BC Evacuee Helpline may also be enabled by the Province to support evacuees to register for ESS, complete needs assessments and assist evacuees to apply to receive ESS by Interac e-Transfer. The evacuee helpline was established by the Ministry of Citizens' Services in partnership with EMCR.

In a large-scale evacuation, if the BC Evacuee Helpline has not already been activated to support evacuees to register for and receive ESS by Interac e-Transfer, communities can request activation by submitting a Resource Request to the PREOC.

ESS online self-service registration

An ERA online self-service registration pathway may be activated in large-scale evacuations. In events when the online self-service registration pathway is activated, eligible evacuees will be able to:

- Complete registration for ESS in ERA and respond to an automated needs assessment.
- Receive supports without the need to attend an in-person reception centre.
- Receive supports by Interac e-Transfer.

The online self-service registration pathway may be activated in large-scale emergencies if community resources are, or are likely to, exceed capacity and timely access to ESS is at risk.

The Province will work with communities to assess requests to activate the pathway during large-scale evacuations and will activate the pathway when necessary to add more surge support.

Host community

When it is not possible for evacuees to remain in the impacted community, it is typical to ask neighbouring communities to help by providing support to the evacuees. It is important for Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities to contact potential host communities in advance of an evacuation to pre-establish relationships and communication channels. There is no obligation for another community to be a host community. Fostering proactive, strong relationships with other communities will encourage mutual assistance in times of need.

When an Indigenous governing body or local authority that is not immediately impacted by the emergency acts as a host community by providing support to evacuees, it can be reimbursed for response costs. The host community's ESS referrals must be filled out under the task number assigned to the host community.

For more detail on host community considerations and guidelines, see the [Evacuation Operational Guidelines](#). For detailed information about financial eligibility for host communities see the [Financial Assistance for Emergency Response and Recovery Costs: A Guide for Local Authorities and First Nations](#). Further questions can be directed to the [EMCR regional office](#).

Police of jurisdiction

If the police of jurisdiction (RCMP or local police service) wish to access a reception centre (RC) and/or group lodging (GL) facility, they should be directed to connect with the RC/GL manager to discuss the purpose of their visit. The RC/GL manager should inform or confirm the police presence with the EOC (ESSD, EPC) and if necessary, inform ESS responders.

The presence of police may lead to discomfort and a hesitation to share important information for some evacuees. A wise practice is to have the police connect with a

community navigator/First Nations community navigator and have them go with the police into the facility if a member of the community they are supporting may be approached by police.

Missing persons

The ESS program assists individuals seeking information about missing or separated family members who may have registered during emergencies. When an inquiry is received, ESS Responders document the inquirer's details, including their name and contact information. Responders must check the evacuee's registration for "consent to share registration status." If the evacuee has provided consent, responders may inform the inquirer that the individual has either:

- Registered and met with a responder, or
- Registered but has not met with a responder

No further information should be shared.

Responders should also add a case note to the evacuee's ESS file for follow-up during their next contact with the ESS team (e.g. for extensions or additional assistance). In situations with multiple inquiries, ESS teams may involve a community navigator to reach out to evacuees and inform them who is trying to contact them.

If the evacuee has not registered or met with a responder, the inquirer should be directed to contact the RCMP or follow the [designated process for missing persons](#). For larger events, a dedicated support line may be established. Responders should confirm the most current process with their ESS team leadership to ensure accurate guidance.

Convergent volunteers

Convergent volunteers are individuals who offer their service and/or expertise during a PSLV activity. They are signed into a task but are not registered PSLVs. When signed in under an EMCR task number, convergent volunteers receive the same workers' compensation and liability coverage as registered PSLVs. Additional details on convergent volunteers can be found in [PSLV Policy 2.06](#).

Convergent volunteers are typically used as surge support to address gaps in service delivery. While they have supported ESS activations in various events, we do not recommend their use in service delivery through ERA. The ERA tool requires prior training and presents additional financial and privacy considerations. Alternative solutions, such as provincial service delivery or remote mutual aid, may be better suited to addressing these needs.

If surge support is required for ERA service delivery, please discuss this with the PREOC or the ESS Program Office.

The Integrated Disaster Council of British Columbia

The Integrated Disaster Council of BC (IDCBC) is a provincial level organization with a mandate to increase coordination amongst participating non-government organizations (NGOs) and agencies by creating a forum for communication and information sharing to support Indigenous governing body and local authority emergency management efforts within the province. The IDCBC helps organizations in working together to enhance community resilience across the four phases of emergency management (mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery). The IDCBC is co-chaired by EMCR and a rotating NGO partner.

Though IDCBC organizations may have provincial mandates or goals, local chapters may have different capabilities based on size and available resources. ESS teams can develop contacts with local chapters of response organizations to ensure coverage within their jurisdiction. This can help to build and strengthen a web of supports and connect evacuees with supports that are outside the scope of the ESS program.

ESS response guidelines

Under [Policy 5.03](#) – Evacuee Living Assistance, if an evacuation has been ordered or authorities have determined that a home is uninhabitable, ESS may be provided. This section provides a five-step guide for ESS responders and EMCR staff in determining the appropriate delivery of the ESS program to people affected by emergencies.

- Step one – Register and determine eligibility
- Step two – Conduct needs assessment
- Step three – Support needs appropriately
- Step four – Plan for recovery
- Step five – Demobilize ESS

Step 1 – Registering and determining eligibility

Determining eligibility for ESS begins with registration of the evacuee and their family. All evacuees who may potentially receive ESS must be registered to ensure complete collection of information and to support informed decision making. Once a household is registered, the responder completes a needs assessment to determine if ESS is applicable.

There are two factors to consider when deciding eligibility for ESS, as outlined in the matrixes below.

1. Is ESS available for this type of emergency event?
2. Are the people affected by the emergency in need of ESS assistance?

Eligibility matrixes

Table 1. ESS eligibility matrix by event type

| Event type | ESS is available... | When or why ESS would not be available |
|---|--|--|
| Single/multi-unit or community level events due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overland flooding • Interface wildfire • Earthquake • Tsunami • Landslide | When an evacuation order is in effect or when displaced on a case-by-case basis dependent on imminent risk to life safety. | Voluntary departure from their primary residence without authorization or support from their Indigenous governing body or local authority. See Evacuation Operational Guidelines and unauthorized evacuees below. |
| Case-By-Case Eligible Events | | |
| Police actions, decisions to condemn buildings or failure of municipal infrastructure. | On a case-by-case basis limited ESS may be provided, with EMCR authorization. | Evictions due to execution of search warrants or premises being declared a crime scene. |
| Power outages. | On a case-by-case basis limited ESS may be provided, with EMCR authorization. | Generally considered an inconvenience and not an emergency. |
| Accident involving public transportation such as a ferry or bus. | On a case-by-case basis limited ESS may be provided, with EMCR authorization. | Usually covered by company providing transportation. Intent is to return people to their homes as soon as possible. |
| Burst water pipes making the home uninhabitable. | On a case-by-case basis limited ESS may be provided, with EMCR authorization. | Generally considered a homeowner/Indigenous governing body/local authority responsibility. Costs may be covered by insurance. Strata or property management organization may assume costs. |

| Non-Eligible Events | | |
|---|---------------|--|
| Eviction due to property owner and tenant disputes. | Not eligible. | This is a civil court matter or a matter for the Residential Tenancy Branch. |

Table 2. ESS eligibility matrix by affected people

| Designation | ESS is available... | When or why ESS would not be available |
|--|--|---|
| Residents who have been ordered to evacuate from their primary residence or the residence has been deemed uninhabitable by a designated authority. | In many cases. This is the primary purpose of the ESS program and Policy 5.03 . Primary residency is defined as a dwelling where an individual or family spends most of their personal time. A person can only have one primary residency at a time. | If the evacuee has their own personal supports available. This includes insurance, friends, and family. |
| Temporary residents and tourists. | On a case-by-case basis. Tourists may qualify if they are considered stranded travelers with no other options – limited ESS services to support health and safety (usually group lodging). EMCR pre-approval is required. | Tourists or short-term visitors are expected to use their own resources to leave the affected area and return to their primary residence. |
| Persons in receipt of income assistance or disability assistance from provincial programs. | Until they are able to contact an Employment Assistance Worker (EAW), or for the duration of an event if an evacuation order that includes their primary residence is in effect. | Once an Employment Assistance Worker (EAW) provides appropriate supports, ESS will no longer be required. |
| Self-evacuees (extraordinary evacuees). | Only with a signed Extraordinary Evacuee Authorization Form from | The individual relies on their own resources during self-evacuation. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| | their Indigenous governing body or local authority. | |
| Scattered evacuees who did not attend the Reception Centre or Host community following an evacuation order. | Only in level three events through the use of ERA e-Transfer (issued virtually by a provincial service delivery or an ESS team). | If the evacuee is unable to receive e-Transfer. In this case, direct the evacuee to the designated reception centre or host community on their evacuation order. |

Step 2 – Needs assessment

Once eligibility has been decided, the ESS responder conducts a needs assessment to determine what is needed to sustain an evacuee through the immediate response period. It is important to actively listen to the needs of evacuees and provide them with information regarding kinds of supports (like referrals or Interac e-Transfer).

ESS responders learn how to conduct a needs assessment during their training, notably in the Registration and Referrals Course. Interviewing and collecting information on evacuees is a skill developed over time and benefits from on-going training and reflection on a regular basis.

Needs: Goods and services to support the basic needs of evacuees. Includes food, clothing, lodging, transportation, and incidentals.

Wants: Comfort or convenience goods and services not required to sustain an evacuee's basic needs. Items such as books or televisions are wants.

Step 3 – Support needs appropriately

ESS responders provide supports to meet immediate needs in the most efficient, economical, effective and safe method possible. This includes consideration of:

- Most efficient (means possible) - simplest, quickest way to provide service to meet the needs of affected persons and ESS responders.
- Most economical - exercise due diligence and consider the most cost-effective way of spending public money.
- Most effective - best way to meet the goal of preserving the safety and wellbeing of people affected by an emergency.
- Safe - provide culturally safe and compassionate resources to all evacuees. ESS is only available to help people during emergencies when no other assistance or support is available to keep them safe by meeting their basic needs. If an evacuee has not

already done so, ESS responders can encourage the evacuee to consider the following types of support:

- Personal financial resources
- Family and friends
- Insurance (when people are traumatized by an event and unsure of their insurance coverage, overnight ESS may be authorized)
- Other government agencies
- NGOs and community groups

Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities may provide ESS for up to 72 hours with a task number from the Province if the provisions of [Policy 5.03](#) and this program guide are followed:

- During this time Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities are accountable for the decisions they make.
- Supports offered outside the eligibility matrix, will result in delays or denial of supplier payments.
- ESS may be extended if there is an evacuation order in effect and evacuees are unable to return home.
- All requests for extensions or exceptional approvals of ESS must be requested by the emergency program coordinator and approved through EMCR by contacting the activated PREOC or the ECC at 1-800-663-3456.

Step 4 – Plan for recovery

While ESS is not responsible for recovery, consideration must be given to next steps during the response phase to ensure a successful transition. Successful recovery means empowering those affected by a disaster in a way that preserves their dignity, embraces choice and shows respect for their experience.

The following are recommended practices to help in the transition.

- Refer evacuees to alternative sources of assistance such as a Resilience Centre or other community support organizations, including Friendship Centres.
- Provide clear information to evacuees on ESS expiry dates. EMCR approval is required for extensions. Extensions for ESS should not exceed three months and require significant justification after one month.
- Identify exceptional circumstances that may affect the transition to recovery.

Vision for recovery: Re-established social, cultural, physical, economic, personal, spiritual and community well-being through inclusive measures that reduce vulnerability to disaster, while enhancing sustainability and resilience.

Step 5 – Demobilize ESS

ESS provides short-term supports that should end as soon as the evacuee can access their own resources (including insurance or connecting with friends/family), the evacuation order is rescinded, the area is deemed safe to return to, or extensions have exceeded three months. ESS may also end if EMCR staff and the Indigenous governing body or local authority finds a more practical way to support evacuee needs (such as an NGO or [ISC](#) funding).

The following are recommended practices to ensure a successful demobilization:

- A self-care debrief should be conducted by responders and management immediately after the event, last shift or end of day before the responder leaves the site in a confidential and culturally safe environment.
- An operational debrief is held within two weeks of the event for all ESS responders.
- The [Disaster Psychosocial Program](#) may be requested to support debriefs.
- Provide resources found on the [Self Care for Disaster Workers website](#) to responders.
- Consider a group after action review immediately following the event.
- Complete documentation such as task reports, volunteer expense reimbursement claims and the administration of registration and referral forms.
- Follow up with suppliers and support organizations to resolve any outstanding issues and maintain good relations.
- Document any operational or policy issues identified during the response on the action checklist and ensure that copies are provided to the EPC and forwarded to the EMCR regional response officer.
- Inventory forms, signage and kit supplies. Reorder as necessary through either the ESS website or other suppliers.

A successful demobilization ensures that responders and suppliers feel respected and are prepared for potential future operations.

ESS for people experiencing vulnerability

The term “people experiencing vulnerability¹” refers to a broad spectrum of evacuees who each have unique needs as well as strengths. The [Evacuation Operational Guidelines](#)

¹ The term “vulnerable” is defined in the Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA) to mean a person who is particularly susceptible to adverse effects of an emergency because of physical or geographic location or environmental factors. In this guide, it is not being used as defined in the EDMA, but instead in its ordinary sense to mean a person who is particularly susceptible to adverse effects due to factors that may intersect such as age, health, disability, and socioeconomic status. Refer to the EDMA’s definition on “intersectional disadvantage” for more.

outline the following categories of vulnerable experiences that may contribute to increased vulnerability during an emergency:

- Communication: limited ability to speak, see and hear; read or understand English, limitations in learning and understanding.
- Medical: assistance needed with bathing or feeding, managing medications, require dialysis, oxygen or other power-dependent equipment to sustain life.
- Independence challenges: maintaining functional independence with medical equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers or scooters.
- Supervision needs: persons with dementia or Alzheimer's and unaccompanied children.
- Transportation needs: persons unable to drive due to disabilities, legal restrictions, socio-economic factors.
- The unhoused or transient people.
- Individuals who use substances and self-medication.
- Individuals experiencing mental health challenges, especially those who may be triggered by institutional settings, like schools or large crowds, including people who have been impacted by trauma.

Individuals, groups and communities may face unique barriers to accessing services. ESS responders must strive to take a solution-focused, compassionate, culturally safe approach to meet unmet needs, which can improve the evacuee's experience during an already stressful time. ESS responders must remain sensitive to the needs of all evacuees while also recognizing that not all needs can be met through the ESS program.

Solutioning may include engagement of partner organizations including NGOs and other government organizations, like health authorities. Solutioning should also include escalation of requests and unmet needs to the EOC, PREOC or RRO.

Warming and cooling centres

Extreme weather often affects people experiencing vulnerability more severely. Warming or cooling centres help to mitigate the risks to health created by extreme temperatures and ensure the safety of the most vulnerable citizens.

Warming and cooling centres are not within the scope of the ESS program. ESS training does not include warming and cooling centre operations or prepare responders to address some of the unique needs of individuals at these centres. Therefore, it is recommended that if ESS responders are deployed to support warming or cooling centres their involvement be limited, for example, to the set up and take down of the site.

If Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities wish to rely on ESS responders / PSLVs in the set up and operation of these sites, a task number must be provided. If a task number is provided, ESS responders / PSLVs will be covered under the same PSLV provisions as any other authorized service (liability and workers' compensation coverage, etc.).

If ESS responders are deployed, it is up to the emergency program coordinator/ESS director to ensure volunteer safety remains the number one priority. PSLVs will still be required to follow routine safety procedures when activated in these services (signing in/out using task registration form, etc.).

Health

Evacuees may have a range of health needs that require support. These may be pre-existing conditions or may have been caused by the emergency event itself. Though healthcare is not within the scope of ESS, it is important for ESS responders to manage health related concerns appropriately.

The ESS responder cannot collect any specific health details (such as medical condition or medication type) from an evacuee. This is due to [Freedom of Information and Privacy Act](#) and the privacy consequences of personal health information being recorded and potentially shared. ESS responders are not to conduct health assessments and can only provide general information to evacuees. For example, ESS responders may ask an evacuee, "do you have enough medication" and provide information on how to access prescription refills. The ESS responders should not ask for or record details regarding the type of medication or the condition that requires medication.

If individuals have health concerns, they should contact their health-care provider, 811, or emergency medical services. In consultation with Health Emergency Management BC (HEMBC), the ESS program provides guidance to evacuees who have evacuated without their medications. See [Appendix F](#) for additional information on evacuee medication.

Medical emergencies

Any medical emergencies must be immediately reported and actions taken to ensure the individual receives appropriate care (such as calling 911). It is recognized that until first responders arrive, or the individual is transferred to hospital, first aid may be required. It is a recommended practice to have a qualified first aid attendant on site whenever practical. For more information on liability coverage for PSLVs refer to [EMCR Policy 5.08 – Liability Coverage](#).

Survivors of violence

Evacuees may have current or past experience of abuse, including violence. Fear of meeting an abuser at a reception centre or accommodations may add to the burden of worry already caused by the emergency. Further, instances of domestic abuse may increase after an emergency event has occurred. There may be a substantial risk of physical, emotional, or spiritual harm. Therefore, ensuring the safety and security of the evacuee is a priority.

The following are recommended practices for ESS responders supporting survivors of violence:

- Contribute to building a trust-based relationship, where relationship is the foundation from which all activities happen.
- Refrain from asking prying questions or trying to learn more than is necessary about the situation, as this may cause trauma.
- Use trauma-informed practice. This can be shown by the following behaviours:
 - Acknowledging traditional territories.
 - Introducing with your name, ancestry and your pronouns (if that feels comfortable to you).
 - Speaking with a smile, taking time for pauses to check in.
- Explain the option of having a file marked “restricted” and ask if the evacuee would like their file to be restricted. A restricted file would mean:
 - Personal details and location will not be disclosed without their consent.
 - A supervisor will take custody of the file and store it in a secure location.
 - In ERA the evacuee may also select ‘No’ on the consent to Share Registration Status.
- Inform the evacuee of [VictimLinkBC](#), a confidential service available 24 hours a day. It provides information and referral services to all victims of crime and offers immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence, including victims of human trafficking exploited for labour or sexual services.
 - Dial 211
 - Call toll-free at 1-800-563-0808
 - Text at 604 836-6381
 - Email at victimlinkBC@bc211.ca

Unattended children

In some emergencies, children or youth (defined as anyone under 19 years of age) may appear at a reception centre unaccompanied by their parents or guardians. Ensuring their safety and knowing when to appropriately inform responsible authorities is a priority. These guidelines are intended to protect both children and ESS responders.

If an unattended child comes to a reception centre, ESS responders must register the child on a restricted file or in ERA (selecting do not share registration status). This file should include names of parents and caregivers. ESS may then provide immediate care as needed.

During emergency evacuations, children may be accompanied by an extended family member, a neighbour, family friend or childcare provider. These children must also be registered on a restricted file.

ESS responders have a duty to report to the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) if they have reason to believe a child may need protection under the [Child Family Community Services Act](#), Section 13. In situations that involve Indigenous children and when

child protection is not needed, recommended practice is to have the EPC/ESSD contact a First Nations Community Navigator, Nation leader or Nation's social worker.

If an ESS responder is unsure as to the safety of a minor (accompanied or unaccompanied) they can contact MCFD and speak to a social worker for direction. MCFD can be reached 24/7 by calling 1-800-663-9122. Additionally, [reporting child abuse in B.C.](#) has information and resources that support decision making around reporting.

Depending on the size and nature of the event, MCFD may play a role in an reception centre. They may:

- Assess and respond to child protection issues surfacing among the evacuees.
- Communicate with foster parents and group home staff about the care of children or youth who are placed with them and find accommodation.
- Request or provide information to relevant parties concerned with locations of displaced children.
- Provide information about existing supports to parents and caregivers dealing with children's reactions to the disaster.

Child activity area

At all times, children within a reception centre should be in the care of their parent/guardian. A separate space within a reception centre may be set aside for children's activities. When a child activity area is set up, it is suggested that the child be within arms reach of their parent/guardian.

- This space needs to be sufficiently open to allow space for proper supervision.
- This space should be securely located away from entrances and exits.
- If children arrive under the care of a teacher or daycare provider, these responsible persons should be asked to remain with the children at the reception centre.

It is recommended that childcare not be activated, as caring for children and keeping them safe is a significant responsibility, particularly in an emergency scenario. If childcare is required there must be at minimum two responders that are qualified/certified childcare providers always supervising the children. An alternative solution is to contract out this service to a qualified/certified childcare provider.

ESS expenditure and payment process

The successful delivery of ESS requires timely and accurate administration to ensure evacuees are supported and suppliers are reimbursed on time. This section outlines expenditure policies and procedures that are specific to the ESS program.

Suppliers are reimbursed by the Province after submitting completed invoices and original referral forms along with appropriate supporting documentation to EMCR HQ.

Reimbursement of costs incurred by ESS responders are provided under the [Volunteer Expense Reimbursement and Allowance Policy \(5.06\)](#). Usually, these costs are paid by an Indigenous governing body or local authority and reimbursed through a response claim to an [EMCR Regional Office](#).

Evacuee living assistance and reimbursement for volunteers is provided under EMCR task number. Task numbers are obtained by calling the ECC at 1-800-663-3456. The ECC may request a cost estimate of the ESS event. This is the Indigenous governing body or local authority's best estimate as to the ESS cost of the event and does not represent a limit on spending.

Category of supports available

The financial limits on each category of ESS support (food, clothing, shelter, transportation, incidentals) are listed on the [ESS Rate Sheet](#), which is affixed to the referral form. If ESS supports are provided via the ERA tool, the summary page will provide the amounts for the evacuee. Requests to exceed these limits must be obtained from the Regional Response Officer or activated PREOC. Details of the authorization must be noted in the comments section of the referral form.

The issuance of a task number does not mean that Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities will be reimbursed for all expenditures in support of an emergency event.

Approval for expenditure outside the ESS program must always be sought from EMCR through the ECC or activated PREOC.

Evacuee Registration and Assistance tool

Prior to 2020, all registration and referrals were administered using paper forms. In 2020, the digital Evacuee Registration and Assistance (ERA) tool became available across B.C. The ERA tool enhances the delivery of ESS through several features including evacuee self-profile creation, Interac e-Transfer, online supplier submissions, secure and easy access to registration and referral information through data export.

Local ESS programs are encouraged to adopt the ERA tool. Paper forms are still a reliable contingency if connectivity or other reasons limit responder access to the ERA tool. It is recommended to keep a stock of ESS forms on hand.

To use the ERA tool, mandatory training is required. This training is offered through the [Justice Institute of British Columbia self-guided courses](#). This training must be completed prior to gaining access to the ERA tool.

EMCR regional offices can provide more information on the use of the tool, including how to get the ERA tool for your team. More information can also be found on the [Launch ESS page](#).

ESS Program forms can be ordered by Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities using the instructions in the [ESS Resource Hub](#).

The ERA tool can be accessed at ess.gov.bc.ca. For more information and support with community onboarding, email EMCR.ESS@gov.bc.ca.

Identification of evacuees

As ESS provides immediate emergency support, government-issued identification (ID) is not required for evacuees to receive referral-based ESS supports.

However, valid government-issued photo ID is required when:

- An evacuee chooses to receive support by Interac e-Transfer through ERA, or
- Ongoing extensions require eligibility verification.

To receive e-Transfer, evacuees must register with the BC Services Card app.

When ID is needed for verification, it must include:

- The evacuee's full name
- Date of birth, and
- A photograph

Examples of ID commonly accepted for ESS purposes include:

- BC Services Card
- BC Driver's License
- Certificate of Indian Status (Status Card)
- Canadian Passport
- A Permanent Residence Card

The [Accepted ID](#) page provides more information about BC Services Card identification requirements.

Additional guidance

When possible, ESS responders should verify address (e.g. utility bill, lease, letter, or verbal confirmation supported by community representative).

If an evacuee does not have ID immediately available, support should still be issued, with ID verification completed as soon as reasonably possible.

Due to the emergency nature of the ESS program, ID is not required to receive immediate referral-based support. However, valid government ID is necessary to access Interac e-Transfer through the ERA tool.

Denying service

An ESS responder's priority should be ensuring their own health and safety. Unfortunately, there may be situations when ESS should not be provided to evacuees due to safety concerns. The two main reasons to deny supports are:

- When there is abusive language/behaviour and a concern for responder safety.
- After services have been denied by a service provider due to health or safety related concerns (e.g. hotel eviction due to property damage).

When denial of services occurs, record if it is due to health and safety concerns with the responder or due to denial from a service provider. ESS notes should avoid emotion-based language and use factual descriptions (e.g. client used abusive language).

Denial of ESS services may have significant negative impacts on an evacuee. Therefore, before denying services ensure that a supervisor has been informed and that the denial does not place the responder at risk. For additional support contact the regional manager.

There are other situations that exclude an evacuee from ESS supports based on their needs assessment. Consult [Policy 5.03](#) and this program guide for more information on program eligibility.

Supplier relationships

Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities are responsible for establishing and maintaining relations with local businesses interested in supporting the program (called suppliers). Supplier consent forms must be used to ensure an understanding of the ESS program and procedures. At minimum, these relationships need to be renewed yearly.

When choosing a supplier during an incident, it is advisable to provide equal opportunities to local businesses including Indigenous businesses. This is done at the discretion of the ESS team based on availability and ability to support a given need.

EMCR is not involved in the creation or maintenance of supplier relationships, and generally does not engage with corporate headquarters of larger businesses.

The [Supplier Quick Reference document](#) is available in the [ESS Resource Hub](#) and offers helpful process tips and reminders for suppliers.

Supplier consent agreements need to be renewed every year.

Insurance

ESS is for people who do not have other support like family, friends or insurance. If you do have insurance, you are expected to use insurance coverage first. However, if your insurance is delayed or does not fully cover your needs, you may still receive limited ESS support.

The following are considered wise practices for working with evacuees:

- Ask evacuees if they have insurance as part of their needs assessment.
- Insurance does not exclude evacuees from ESS. ESS may still be provided on a limited basis if insurance does not provide full coverage or takes time to access.
- Evacuees that have insurance should be encouraged to access their insurance as soon as possible as this is a critical step in recovering from the emergency. Some policies are time sensitive and may require immediate action.
- If evacuees have difficulties contacting their insurance company or are uncertain about their coverage, only essential ESS supports should be provided pending clarification of insurance.
- Responders should avoid discussions about insurance policies and deductibles. If there are specific concerns relating to the provision of ESS to an insured individual, it is recommended to provide ESS to cover the evacuee's immediate needs. After providing ESS supports, teams should raise the concerns with EMCR if needed.
- Indigenous persons who live on reserve lands may have their insurance provided through the Indigenous governing body. This insurance often does not cover additional living expenses and the evacuee may still require ESS supports.
- During extended events, insurance coverage may not cover evacuees for the duration they are out of home (on evacuation order). These evacuees may seek ESS supports after their coverage has ended and should not be excluded from ESS supports.
- Help in resolving insurance related concerns is available by calling the [Insurance Bureau of Canada \(IBC\)](#) toll-free at 1-844-227-5422 or e-mail askibcwest@ibc.ca.
- IBC can also be invited to attend a reception centre if ongoing insurance issues become a problem. This service can be sourced through a Resource Request.
- During an emergency evacuation affected individuals may not be sure which company they hold a policy with. Insurance claim line numbers are often published on the website of the bank, credit union, or other agency that sold the policy.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) can help in resolving insurance related concerns. Contact them at 1-844-227-5422

Extraordinary evacuees

Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities should consider evacuating vulnerable populations during an evacuation alert. There may also be times when individuals believe it is

in their best interest to evacuate from their community before an evacuation alert or order is in effect. In such situations, the Indigenous governing body or local authority should consider each case and authorize extraordinary evacuees as needed.

Extraordinary evacuees require an [Extraordinary Evacuee Authorization Form \(EEAF\)](#) to receive ESS supports. Without authorization from the Indigenous governing body or local authority, these individuals will be an unauthorized evacuee and will not receive ESS supports. It is critical to advise the supporting ESS team / host community that there are extraordinary evacuees that have received authorization to evacuate prior to an evacuation alert or order and confirm the reception centre location and hours of operation.

More information including the Extraordinary Evacuee Authorization Form is available in the [Evacuation Operational Guide](#). Individuals who have not received authorization must rely on their own resources during self-evacuation.

Food

Restaurant meals

Meal rates do not cover gratuities or the purchase of alcohol, which are the responsibility of the evacuee. If a restaurant is co-located with a hotel, a referral may be written for both meals and accommodation if both are owned by the same business.

Groceries

Evacuees staying in a location with a kitchenette or with friends/family may prefer to cook their own meals. ESS responders should remind evacuees to consider whether they have adequate refrigerated storage for perishable goods. Purchases of tobacco, cannabis or alcohol are not considered eligible grocery costs.

Bulk food orders

The ESS referral form is not intended for bulk purchases. Requests for bulk food orders for evacuees or response workers should be sent to logistics at the EOC.

Dietary requirements

People have diverse dietary requirements and providing flexibility in food options is important for health and cultural reasons. It is a wise practice to ensure food restrictions are accommodated and diabetic-friendly options are available.

Lodging

Commercial accommodation

Local ESS teams may help evacuees access commercial accommodation (hotels/motels) by issuing referrals. ESS may use the [provincial government rates for hotels/motels](#). These rates are lower than regular rates and are therefore preferential when selecting suppliers.

Government rates are based on single occupancy but are also to be used as a benchmark to determine family rates. As a guideline, add \$10.00 for each additional adult and \$5.00 for each youth 13 to 18 years. If a family's size requires use of more than one room, the regular government rate may apply to each room.

If no accommodations offering the provincial government rate are available, teams must negotiate the best rate and confirm the rate prior to use with the regional office/PREOC.

Additional charges (such as room service or damages) are not covered by ESS and must be paid by the evacuee upon departure from the hotel. More information is available in the [Hotel damages](#) section.

It is important to be mindful when booking hotel and motel rooms to consider the safety of people experiencing vulnerabilities, differences in accessibility or concerns for physical safety. Evacuees or community navigators / First Nations community navigators may be able to recommend lodging options that support cultural, spiritual or physical safety (with the understanding that these spaces are not always available). These lodgings may provide unique services or be in areas that promote independence and/or provide added safety for the evacuee.

Shelter allowance

Evacuees can choose to receive a shelter allowance to independently find their own accommodation that supports their accommodation needs. The shelter allowance is financial support for evacuees to meet their accommodation needs in the way that works best for them, whether that's staying with friends or family, booking a hotel/motel in the location of their choice, staying at a campsite or another accommodation option. The allowance will be given directly to the evacuee to best meet their accommodation needs. This support replaces the previous billeting option.

Evacuees can:

- Receive the shelter allowance if they choose to independently pursue their own accommodation.
- Receive their shelter allowance through Interac e-Transfer or by mailed cheque.

- Choose their own type of accommodation (i.e. billeting, hotel/motel, campsite, and others).
- Pursue accommodation in any community they choose.
- Choose their own accommodation without providing the address/location.

For the current shelter allowance rates, see the [Rate Sheet](#).

ESS responders can assist evacuees to access the shelter allowance in one of three ways:

- ERA Interac e-Transfer: Use ERA to help evacuee to receive shelter allowance by Interac e-Transfer.
- ERA Digital Referral: Use ERA to help evacuee to receive shelter allowance by cheque. Requires printing Referral form from ERA, and sending form to EMCR.
- Paper Process: Use the fully paper process to help evacuee to receive shelter allowance by cheque. Two forms must be completed and sent to EMCR: the Claim for Shelter Allowance form (found in the [ESS Resource Hub](#)) and the white paper Referral form.

Group lodging

Referral forms are given to evacuees staying at a group lodging facility. To recover costs, invoices for group lodging are sent directly to EMCR regional office on a response claim submission form. When possible, ESS must negotiate a rate for use of the building (provided it is not a community owned facility) ahead of time.

Clothing

A clothing allowance is provided to protect the health and well being of evacuees to ensure they have adequate clothing while evacuated. It is expected that if an evacuation alert is in place, evacuees will have packed their essential clothing. The established maximum is \$150 per adult or child. A referral for clothing is a one-time allotment per event unless pre-authorized by EMCR. An additional \$50 supplement may be added during periods of extreme winter weather with EMCR approval.

Transportation

Transportation costs are provided to enable evacuees to travel to receive ESS supports if they cannot do so on their own. ESS responders may provide referrals for taxis or bus passes. Routine transportation costs (i.e., to and from work or personal appointments) are not provided by ESS.

Gas cards may also be authorized for extraordinary events that require evacuees to travel longer distances (normally over 100km) to the nearest reception centre. As this support is event specific, speak with a RRO or the PREOC to confirm availability, approval and process for distribution.

Incidentals

An incidentals rate of \$50 maximum per person may be used to cover miscellaneous items such as personal hygiene products (like diapers or laundry supplies), pet food, over the counter medications, hotel charges for pets and other immediate needs. Incidentals are a one-time allotment per event unless pre-authorized by EMCR.

Additional incidentals may be authorized for extraordinary events that have exhausted support provided by NGOs. These must be pre-authorized by EMCR.

Detailed breakdowns of each of the support categories are included in the Registration and Referrals course. Maximum expenditures for each category are found on the ESS Rate Sheet. ESS responders need to ensure evacuees understand their obligation to pay for anything above these limits (like room service fees).

Exceptions and extensions

Occasionally it is necessary to request additional supports to meet evacuee needs. This may be in the form of exceptions to maximum allowable amounts or an extension of the time period ESS may be offered in. Exceptions and extensions are an additional financial commitment from the Province and require authorization from EMCR before approval. Supports offered beyond the prescribed maximums and the approved time period without approval may result in significant delays or denial of supplier payments.

Depending upon the situation, approval may be granted from:

- Director, Regional Response.
- Regional Response Officer
- Provincial Duty Manager
- PREOC Director
- PECC Director
- ESS Specialist

Procedure:

1. The EPC or delegate contacts the ECC at 1-800-663-3456.
2. The ECC obtains details and contacts the EMCR representative.
3. The EMCR representative then either:
 - Contacts the EPC directly to discuss, or
 - Asks the ECC to communicate the decision to the EPC
4. The EMCR representative will advise the ECC of any extraordinary expenditure approvals to be noted in the operations log.
5. The EPC ensures the ESS team is made aware of approvals/denials of requests.

Direct purchase

Standard ESS procedures should be adhered to whenever possible. Depending upon the situation and nature of the need, Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities may also consider supporting evacuee need through:

- Community organizations
- Expenditure authorization form (EAF)
- Resource request (RR)

Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities may directly purchase supports by following these guidelines:

- The registration and referral process or equivalent, including needs assessment, should be carried out with all evacuees.
- The Indigenous governing body or local authority must make purchases directly.
 - The Indigenous governing body or local authority is listed as the supplier on the referral form.
 - The actual service provider is listed in the comments box.
 - EMCR cannot reimburse individual ESS responders and/or individual staff for purchases.
- Purchases must adhere to the principles in the ESS program guide and maximum rates prescribed on the rate sheet. The Indigenous governing body or local authority will be responsible for expenses that do not adhere to these guidelines or exceed the rates, unless approved by EMCR.
 - Purchases should be made following the most efficient, most economical, most effective and safest means possible.
 - Extraordinary expenditures beyond the regular rates and extensions to supports must be approved by EMCR.

Reimbursements

Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities will receive reimbursements by following these guidelines:

- Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities must keep records on evacuees and supports provided through paper registration/referral forms, direct purchases or the ERA tool.
- Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities must track expenditures for referrals.
 - EMCR recommends using the standard response claim submission form and entering the referral number into column C.
 - EMCR may ask for these records for audit purposes. EMCR may withhold reimbursement if they are unable to verify that the evacuee received supports.

- Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities send a reimbursement package to ESSFinanceInquiries@gov.bc.ca, including:
 - The referral tracker, including all referral numbers and expenditures.
 - PDFs of all supporting documentation, including the referrals and all invoices/receipts.
- For protracted events, Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities may submit reimbursement packages by date period rather than for the entire event.
- Enquiries on the status of payments should be directed to ESSFinanceInquiries@gov.bc.ca

The email subject lines should adhere to the following format:

FN/L Government Name - Task # - \$ Amount

(e.g. City of Kamloops - Task # 22-1234 - \$10,000)

Supplier invoicing process

Once a supplier receives an authorized referral form, they may provide the specified support in accordance with the supplier consent form and the supplied ESS rates sheet. Charges for goods and services must not exceed the attached ESS rates. If using the ERA tool, the ESS rates are printed on the referral form. Services must be provided only to those individuals listed on the referral form and within the specified valid only dates.

Expenditures for evacuees are provided under [Policy 5.03](#). Suppliers are reimbursed by the Province and may submit for payment using one of four methods.

Option one (preferred)

Submit invoices, receipts and referrals online through the ERA tool by using the ESS supplier portal. EMCR finance will be able to reimburse ESS suppliers faster by reviewing these submissions online, processing claims and issuing payments with fewer steps.

If ESS suppliers need assistance with the navigation and submission via the ERA tool, they can contact the ERA tool support team using the contact information provided on the landing page. Following successful ERA submission, additional questions regarding their submission can be directed to EMCR finance at ESSFinanceInquiries@gov.bc.ca

Option two

Mail original invoices, receipts and original referral forms along with supporting documentation to EMCR HQ. EMCR's mailing address is included on ESS referral forms.

Option three

ESS responders cannot use their personal email to send ESS forms or ERA documents and must use a government email. Protecting responder and evacuee personal information is a priority while delivering ESS remotely. Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities email accounts can be used in all correspondence with evacuees and EMCR. Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities are responsible to provide access to appropriate email accounts, including when responders use personal computers.

Suppliers can email referrals and copies of purchase receipts or invoices to ESSFinanceInquiries@gov.bc.ca. Photos of documents will not be accepted. The documents must be scanned into a PDF format. It is a wise practice for suppliers to keep original copies of referral forms and receipts as these may be requested later. Email subject lines should adhere to the following format:

Supplier's legal name - Referral # - \$ Amount
(e.g. ABC Corporation - Referral # 123456 - \$100)

Option four

Secure file transfer: Supporting evacuees may generate many digital documents. Some email accounts may have trouble with attachment file sizes. Secure file transfers offer an alternative for submission to EMCR.

Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities who wish to use the provincial government's secure file transfer service should notify their PREOC or RRO. Following an Indigenous governing body or local authority's request, the Provincial ESS program will provide an invitation to send files and the required system access information. Files sent from other file transfer service providers will not be accepted.

Hotel damages

In some cases, accommodation suppliers can be reimbursed for evacuee damage. Suppliers must first seek to reimburse costs from the evacuee and their insurance provider prior to requesting reimbursement from EMCR. If unable to recover costs from the evacuee or insurance provider, the supplier and EMCR will adhere to the following process:

1. Supplier reports damages that they have been unable to recuperate costs from the evacuee or their insurance provider.
2. Supplier documents steps taken to recuperate costs and conversations with both the evacuee and their insurance provider.
3. EMCR confirms the damage with the supplier and would reimburse the supplier after the evidence of damages and repair cost documentation has been reviewed and approved.

This process is only available to temporary lodging facilities and not private residences providing billeting. Reimbursement may be provided for damages assessed as being over \$1,000 dollars and be up to a maximum of \$10,000 dollars.

Payment process

Once EMCR finance receives an invoice package from a supplier they may begin the payment process:

- Match invoices and receipts to referrals (clear organization of these documents by the supplier reduces time to payment).
- Assess invoices, referrals and receipts to ensure a match between the invoiced services and those approved on the referral, as well as ensuring services adhere to EMCR regulations.
- EMCR finance may work with the supplier, EMCR regional offices, ESS HQ and local ESS teams to solve issues.
- Solutions involving payment in excess of the amounts noted on the referral require documented rationale and approval from the ESSD.
- Once all requirements have been satisfied EMCR finance may authorize payment.

Errors made on referral forms, missing or incomplete information, the provision of ineligible items, or services in excess of the specified ESS rates can cause delays or reduction to payment.

Form retention

Once completed ESS evacuee case files have been collected by the documentation unit and separated accordingly, their retention is determined in accordance with the operational records classification system. Information gathered on ESS evacuee case files contains private and confidential information that is collected under the authority of the [EDMA](#) and is subject to the requirements of the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#).

Evacuee case files include:

- ESS registration
- Referral forms
- Change of information forms

Responsibilities

Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities are responsible to retain ESS evacuee case files in an easily accessible secure location (office) for the period of six months upon completion of the event. The event is considered complete when both ESS and recovery



support has been concluded and the information contained is no longer required by the Indigenous governing body or local authority for operational purposes.

After this period, the Indigenous governing body or local authority must transfer ESS evacuee case files to their EMCR regional office. Evacuee case files are to be arranged by EMCR task number and accompanied with a list detailing all task numbers included. The transfer of the evacuee case files must allow the item to be tracked through a courier service or Canada Post (registered, priority, express, expedited). The delivery costs are eligible through the submission of a response claim submission form.

The evacuee case files will be sent to a secure off-site government storage for a period of three years, after which they are destroyed.

Appendix A – Glossary

Action plan: Contains objectives and specific tasks for the operational period. The action plan may be oral or written. When written, the action plan may have several forms as attachments (e.g. traffic plan, safety plan, communications plan, map, etc.)

Activation: When a natural disaster, emergency or an event forces a community to evacuate and the Indigenous governing body or local authority initiates their ESS plan.

Allocated resources: Resources dispatched to an incident.

Auditing: The examination of records to determine if those records are accurate and in accordance with the program's processes and regulations.

Available resources: Incident-based resources that are ready for deployment.

Branch: The organizational level having functional or geographic responsibility for major parts of incident operations.

The British Columbia Emergency Management System (BCEMS): A comprehensive management scheme that ensures a co-ordinated and organized provincial response and recovery to any and all emergency incidents. The broad spectrum of components of the BCEMS includes operations and control management, qualifications, technology, training and publications.

Chain of command: A series of management positions in order of authority.

Child activity area: Unit within the operations section responsible for providing a safe environment for childcare at a reception centre.

Command: The act of directing and/or controlling resources by virtue of explicit legal, organizational, or delegated authority.

Community Navigator: Is an individual identified by the community to act as a liaison between the EOC, ESS, support agencies, and evacuees. Advocates for evacuees and facilitates solutions to complex and/or unique evacuee needs.

Coordination: The process of systematically analyzing a situation, developing relevant information, and informing appropriate command/management authority of viable alternatives for selection of the most effective combination of available resources to meet specific objectives. The coordination process (which can be either intra- or inter-organization) does not involve dispatch actions. However, personnel responsible for coordination may perform command or dispatch functions within the limits established by specific organization delegations, procedures, legal authority, etc.

Compassionate communication: a method that creates relationships based on empathy, compassion, co-operation and harmonious respect for self and others. Compassionate communication is also known as non-violent communication.

Critical resource: Material, personnel and finances that are in short supply and are needed by more than one incident management team or are needed for high priority assignments.

Cultural safety and humility: An outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in emergency management. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving ESS. Cultural safety includes and goes beyond cultural awareness, which refers to awareness of differences between cultures. It also goes beyond cultural sensitivity, which is about realizing the legitimacy of difference and the power of one's own life experience can have on others (Koptie, 2009).

Delegation of authority: A statement provided to the incident commander by the organization executive delegating authority and assigning responsibility. The delegation of authority can include objectives, priorities, expectations, constraints, and other considerations or guidelines as needed. Organizations may require written delegation of authority to be given to incident commanders prior to their assuming command on larger incidents.

Deputy: A qualified individual who could be delegated the authority to manage a functional operation or perform a specific task. In some cases, a deputy could act as relief for a superior and therefore must be fully qualified in the position. Deputies can be assigned to the Manager, general staff, and branch coordinators. Deputies can be used at the site and site support level e.g. reception centre, group lodging, EOC, PREOC, and PECC.

Disaster: A calamity caused by accident, fire, explosion, or technical failure, or by the forces of nature that has resulted in serious harm to the health, safety or welfare of people, or in widespread damage to property.

Dispatch: The implementation of a command decision to move a resource or resources from one place to another.

Documentation unit: Unit within the planning section responsible for collecting, recording, and safeguarding all documents relevant to the response.

Emergency: A present or imminent event that is caused by accident, fire, explosion, or technical failure, or by the forces of nature and requires prompt coordination of action or special regulation of persons or property to protect the health, safety and welfare of people, or to limit damage to property.

Emergency management: An organized effort to mitigate against, prepare for, respond to and recover from an emergency.

Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR): EMCR is the Province's lead coordinating agency for all emergency management activities, including planning, training, testing and exercising, to help strengthen provincial preparedness.

Emergency operations centre (EOC): A designated facility established by an organization or jurisdiction to co-ordinate the overall organization or jurisdictional response and support to an emergency response.

Emergency program coordinator (EPC): The individual within a community who has coordination responsibility for jurisdictional emergency management.

Emergency response plan: The plan that each jurisdiction has and maintains for responding to incidents based on a hazard and risk analysis.

Emergency Support Services (ESS): Those services provided on a short-term basis to evacuees in emergency situations.

Emotional support unit: Unit within the operations section responsible for counselling services to evacuees and ESS personnel.

ESS branch coordinator: Within all levels of the BCEMS organizational structure (EOC, PREOC and PECC) there is an ESS branch in the operations section. The coordinator is focussed on the support and requirements of the ESS program at each respective level of operations.

ESS director (ESSD): The individual responsible for the management and coordination of a local ESS program/team. They are also responsible for ESS planning and response activities.

ESS support organization: The term used to designate assisting and cooperating organizations.

Evacuation Alert: Informs the affected population of a potential or current threat which may lead to an Evacuation Order.

Evacuation Order: Means that the local community elected leaders have determined that to best ensure the safety of the impacted population has issued an order to leave the specified area immediately.

Evacuee Registration and Assistance (ERA) Tool: A digital tool that supports the delivery of the ESS program.

Finance section: The section responsible for all incident costs and financial considerations including the time unit, procurement unit, compensation/claims unit and cost unit.

First aid unit: Unit within the operations section responsible for providing emergency first aid.

First Nations Community Navigator: Is an individual identified by the community to act as a liaison between the EOC, ESS, support agencies and evacuees. Advocates for evacuees and facilitates solutions to complex and/or unique evacuee needs. A First Nations Community Navigator also has in depth knowledge of the affected Indigenous peoples' culture, practices, and protocols. Supports, demonstrates, promotes, and facilitates the implementation of culturally safe practices within ESS program delivery.

Function: In BCEMS, function refers to the five major activities e.g. command/management, operations, planning, logistics, and finance (In some instances, sections, branches and units are loosely referred to as functions as well). The term function is also used when describing the activity involved, e.g. the planning function.

General staff: A group of management personnel reporting to the manager. The general staff consist of:

- Operations section chief
- Planning section chief
- Logistics section chief
- Finance section chief

Group lodging (GL): Congregate facility for the lodging and nourishment of evacuees.

Group lodging manager: The individual responsible for the overall management at the GL.

Incident(s): An occurrence either human caused or by natural phenomena that requires action by response personnel to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property, environment and reduce economic and social losses.

Incident commander/manager: The individual responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site. The term incident commander shall be deemed to include unified command.

Incident command post (ICP): The location at which the primary command functions are executed. The ICP may be co-located or shared with the incident base or other incident facilities.

Incident command system (ICS): A standardized emergency management concept specifically designed to allow its user(s) to adopt an integrated organizational structure equal to the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents, without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries.

Information officer: A member of the command/management staff responsible for interfacing with the public and media or with other organizations requiring information directly from the incident. There is only one information officer per incident. The information officer may have assistants.

Jurisdiction (Jurisdictional): The range or sphere of authority. Organizations have jurisdiction at an incident related to their legal responsibilities and authority for incident mitigation.

Jurisdictional organization: The organization that has jurisdiction and responsibility for a specific geographical area, or a mandated function and includes key ministries as defined in the EDMA.

Level one ESS: A localized event that can be managed using a minimal number of ESS resources (e.g. single house fire).

Level two ESS: A event that requires the full use of an Indigenous governing body or local authority's ESS resources. A level 2 event might include the activation of a reception centre and an EOC (e.g. fire in an apartment complex affecting hundreds of units).

Level three ESS: A emergency that exceeds an Indigenous governing body or local authority's capacity to respond and requires assistance from neighboring jurisdictions or the Province (e.g. interface wildfire that causes an entire city to evacuate).

Liaison officer: A member of the command/management staff responsible for coordinating with representatives from external cooperating and assisting organizations.

Logistics section: The section responsible for providing resources (material and human) and support to the response.

Management staff: The ESS management staff consists of the manager, information officer, safety officer, and liaison officer. They may have an assistant or assistants as needed.

Management team: The management team consists of the manager, officers (information, safety, liaison) and general staff (section chiefs).

Meet and greet unit: Unit within the operation section of a reception centre responsible for initial triage and welcoming of evacuees to the centre.

Modernization: The process of improving the provincial ESS program through updating and transforming the program to increase efficiencies.

Mutual aid agreement: Written agreement between organizations and/or jurisdictions in which they agree to help one another upon request by furnishing resources.

Officer: The title for the personnel responsible for the command/management staff positions of safety, liaison and information.

Operational guidelines: An organization's written procedure(s) that establishes a commonly accepted course of action and specifies the functional limitations of personnel in performing emergency operations.

Operational period: The period scheduled for execution of a given set of operational actions as specified in the action plan. Operational periods can be of various lengths, although usually not over 24 hrs.

Operations section: The section responsible for all tactical operations (services direct to evacuees) at the reception centre or group lodging facility.

Organization representative(s): An individual assigned to an incident from an assisting or cooperating organization who has been delegated authority to make decisions on matters

affecting that organization's participation at the incident. Organization representatives report to the liaison officer.

Pet care unit: Unit within the operations section of a reception centre, responsible for a safe and secure location to temporarily house domestic pets while evacuees are at the reception centre.

Planning section: The section responsible for the collection, evaluation, and dissemination of information related to the incident, and for the preparation and documentation of action plans.

Primary services branch: Branch within the operations section responsible for meet and greet, registration, referrals for food, clothing lodging, inquiry and on-site goods distribution in a reception centre. Also check in/check out, sleeping area and meals distribution units in a group lodging facility.

Profile creation: Refers to the process of creating a personal profile in ERA in advance of an emergency event. This involves the evacuee proactively entering their personal details and basic contact information. Unlike a registration, a profile is not associated with a specific evacuation event and serves as preparedness, allowing for quicker and simpler registration should an evacuation occur.

Provincial central coordination level: A coordination level within the B.C. Emergency Management System, which is activated to co-ordinate all provincial resources. This level interacts with the provincial regional coordination level.

Provincial emergency coordination centre (PECC): The PECC will be established to manage activities at the provincial central coordination level. The five functions provided by PECC are management, operations coordination, planning, logistics, and finance/administration. The PECC level follows the same basic organizational support levels in BCEMS.

Provincial regional coordination level: A coordination level within the B.C. Emergency Management System which is activated to co-ordinate provincial resources on a regional basis. This level interacts with local authorities and ministry EOCs.

Provincial regional emergency operations centre (PREOC): A PREOC manages activities at the provincial regional coordination level and co-ordinates the joint efforts of government and NGOs.

Reception centres (RC): A safe gathering place where evacuees can register, are interviewed to determine their immediate emergency needs and receive supports and assistance.

Reception centre manager: The individual responsible for the overall management at the reception centre.

Referral: The second step in the registration and referral process. The providing of services to evacuees. A form that provides ESS from a specific supplier.

Referrals (for food, clothing and lodging) unit: Unit in operations section of a reception centre that refers evacuees to community suppliers to meet their immediate needs.

Referrals unit supervisor (RUS): Helps and supports referral responders in completing ESS referral forms for evacuees and seeks approval for expenditures beyond ESS rates.

Registration: The initial step of the registration and referral process, completed when an evacuee seeks support during a specific emergency event. This process captures the evacuee's current situation and the immediate details of the evacuee and their family, directly linking their information to a particular emergency.

Registration unit: Unit within the operations section of a reception centre that records the whereabouts of evacuees for the purpose of family reunification.

Resources: Personnel and equipment available, or potentially available, for assignment to incident(s).

Section: That organization level with responsibility for a major functional area of the reception centre or group lodging facility, e.g. operations, planning, logistics, finance.

Site support level: A coordination level within the B.C. Emergency Management System that is activated to provide policy direction and resources support to an incident commander.

Supervisor: Individuals within organizational units that are assigned specific managerial responsibilities, e.g. check in/check out unit or meals distribution unit.

Supplier: An entity that provides ESS to an evacuee through a referral.

Task(s): Specific actions taken to achieve operational objectives for an operational period.

Task number: A control number assigned by EMCR to each response or training event for the purpose of tracking an approved response and providing support for ESS responders with workers' compensation and liability coverage.

Unit(s): The organizational element having functional responsibility for a specific function within the sections of operations, planning, logistics, or finance.

Volunteer/staff management branch: Branch within logistics section that is responsible for the management of personnel at the reception centre or group lodging facility. This includes the recruitment, screening, orientation, assignment, training, evaluation and recognition of personnel.

Appendix B – Acronyms

| | |
|---|--|
| BCEMS - B.C. Emergency Management System | HEMBC - Health Emergency Management BC |
| CALS - Cultural Activity Location Support | ICS - Incident Command System |
| CRC - Canadian Red Cross | IDCBC - Integrated Disaster Council of BC |
| EAF - Expenditure Authorization Form | ISC - Indigenous Services Canada |
| ECC – Emergency Coordination Centre | JIBC - Justice Institute of British Columbia |
| EEAF - Extraordinary Evacuee Authorization Form | MCFD - Ministry of Children and Family Development |
| EMCR - Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness | MSDPR - Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction |
| EMCR HQ - Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness Headquarters | NGO - Non-Government Organization |
| EDMA - Emergency and Disaster Management Act | NESS - National Emergency Strategic Supplies |
| EOC - Emergency Operations Centre | PECC - Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre |
| EMT - Emergency Management Technician | PDM - Provincial Duty Manager |
| EPC - Emergency Program Coordinator | PREOC - Provincial Regional Emergency Operation Centre |
| ERA - Evacuee Registration and Assistance | PSLV - Public Safety Lifeline Volunteer |
| ESS - Emergency Support Services | RC - Reception Centre |
| ESSD - Emergency Support Services Director | RRO – Regional Response Officer |
| FNHA - First Nations Health Authority | RM - Regional Manager |
| GL - Group Lodging | ROA - Regional Office Administrator |
| | RR - Resource Request |
| | TSA - The Salvation Army |

Appendix C – Links to resources

The tables below contain the full URLs for many hyperlinks found in this program guide. The full URLs are included to benefit the print editions of this guide. Note that these links may be updated so it is best to check the online version of the guide for the latest information.

Websites

| Resource name | Location |
|---|---|
| BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres | https://bcaafc.com |
| British Columbia Emergency Management System (BCEMS) | https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/EMCR/bcems/bcems_guide.pdf |
| Canadian Red Cross | https://www.redcross.ca |
| Declaration of Commitment to Cultural Safety and Humility in Emergency Management Services for First Nations People in B.C. | https://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/new-declaration-commits-to-cultural-safety-in-emergency-management-services-in-bc |
| Disaster Psychosocial Services Program (DPS) | http://www.phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/health-emergency-management-bc/provincial-psychosocial-services/disaster-psychosocial-support |
| EMCR Regional Offices | https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/contact-us |
| EMCR Website | www.gov.bc.ca/embc |
| EmergencyInfoBC | www.emergencyinfobc.gov.bc.ca |
| Emergency Operational Guidelines | https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/emergency-management/provincial-emergency-planning |
| ESS Information | www.gov.bc.ca/emergencysocialservices |
| ESS Portal | https://ess.gov.bc.ca |

| | |
|---|---|
| ESS Resource Hub | Using your responder login on the ERA tool, email emcr.ess@gov.bc.ca , or access directly https://938b4159-610d-4708-9523-7e98db38c60c.shelf-ssp-ca.com/en?ref=Logo |
| ESS Rate Sheet | See the ESS Resource Hub |
| Financial Assistance for Emergency Response and Recovery Costs: A Guide for Local Authorities and First Nations | https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/local-emergency-programs/local-gov-operations#finance |
| First Nations Health Authority | https://www.fnha.ca |
| Group Lodging Operational Guidelines | See the ESS Resource Hub |
| HealthLink BC | https://www.healthlinkbc.ca |
| Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) | https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada.html |
| Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) | http://www.ibc.ca/bc |
| Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) ESS programs | https://www.jibc.ca/programs-courses/schools-departments/school-public-safety/emergency-management-division/government-and-corporate/emergency-support-services |
| Ministry of Children and Family Development | https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/children-and-family-development |
| Missing Persons, process | https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/missing-persons |
| PreparedBC | www.gov.bc.ca/preparedbc |
| Provincial Government Rates for Hotels/Motels | http://csa.pss.gov.bc.ca/businesstravel |
| Public Safety Lifeline Volunteer | https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/local-emergency-programs/volunteers |

| | |
|---|---|
| PSLV Rates | See EMCR Policy 5.06 below |
| Reception Centre Operational Guidelines | See the ESS Resource Hub |
| Reporting Child Abuse in B.C. | https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/protecting-children/reporting-child-abuse |
| The Salvation Army | https://salvationarmy.ca |
| VictimLinkBC | https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/victimlinkbc |

Policies and legislation

| Resource name | Location |
|---|---|
| Bill C-92 (new federal leg) | https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/bill/C-92/first-reading |
| Bill 41 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act | https://www.leg.bc.ca/parliamentary-business/overview/41st-parliament/4th-session/bills/1st read/gov41-1.htm |
| Child Family Community Services Act | http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96046_01 |
| Emergency and Disaster Management Act | https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/23037 |
| EMCR Policy 2.14/2.15 CALS and First Nations Community Navigators | https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/emergency-management/policies |
| EMCR Policy 5.03/5.06 | |
| EMCR PSLV registration forms | |
| Emergency Program Act | https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/consol41/00_96111_01 |
| Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act | http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96165_00 |

Appendix D – Response to apartment fires

Apartment fires may occur at any time without warning and often affect populations experiencing vulnerabilities with additional needs for assistance. These circumstances can present a challenge for any ESS team.

Important factors in achieving a successful response include:

- Pre-planning for response and recovery
- Inter-agency coordination
- Developing a pro-active public information plan
- Making time for the practice of cultural safety and humility

Preparedness

Planning for apartment fires needs to be included in an Indigenous governing body or local authority's ESS plan. As governments prepare this plan, they must consider the additional pressures an apartment fire might place on their ESS team. Preparation for these larger and more complex events must consider the following:

- Number of ESS responders that may be required
- Callout procedures for larger events
- Preparing potential reception centres and group lodging facilities for use
- Supporting ESS with an EOC
- Development and maintenance of relationships with support organizations, including suppliers, non-government organizations and community organizations
- Preparing adequately for supports to populations experiencing vulnerabilities

ESS teams need to identify key community partners and resource providers including:

- EMCR Regional Response Officers
- First Nations Health Authority and other health authorities
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction staff
- BC Housing
- Mutual aid partner communities
- Local support organizations such as Aboriginal Friendship Centres, the [Canadian Red Cross](#), [The Salvation Army](#), Canadian Disaster Animal Response Team and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. This is not an exhaustive list. All relevant support organizations should be engaged.

Apartment fire planning must include a public information plan to include media contacts and appoint a community spokesperson. A wise practice for this plan is to have it reviewed with a cultural safety and humility lens to prevent unintended harms. A plan which takes a pro-active approach by reaching out to media can avoid inaccuracies and confusion. It is important that

all team members follow the public information plan to ensure consistent messaging in support of response and recovery efforts.

Response

At the direction of the EPC, open a reception centre and keep it open until all evacuees have been supported. After the initial rush of registrations and referrals, there will still be a requirement for ESS assistance for late registrations, people experiencing vulnerabilities and requests for information. Some ESS responses to apartment fires may benefit from the support of an EOC. An EOC can help with access to resources and improve inter-agency coordination.

Planning for the transition to recovery needs to begin as soon as possible. This may require collaboration with longer term support organizations in order to help evacuees throughout the transition and address unmet needs in support. Plans need to aim for the end of ESS assistance and supports within 72 hours and be aware of the process for extension. Ensure evacuees understand the expectation to have a personal plan in place before ESS support ends and ask if they need support in this development.

Transition to recovery

The public information plan can also support the transition to recovery. It is wise practice for the EPC to convene a public meeting (preferably within 24 hours of the emergency) in order to share information and identify unmet needs. This meeting can help create a shared understanding of the situation and improve the coordination of agencies with evacuees and each other. Request media assistance with publicizing the meeting. Encourage all evacuees to attend, as well as ESS responders, representatives from the fire department, property owners, community service agencies, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and EMCR. Consider the accessibility needs, including mobile, visual and language, of evacuees and other people experiencing vulnerabilities in the public information plan.

Demobilization

Approval to demobilize a reception centre or group lodging facility should be obtained from the EOC ESS branch coordinator if activated. Instructions on demobilization are found in the [Reception Centre Operational Guidelines](#). Debrief both ESS responders and community partners. Host an after-action review to identify lessons learned and update the community ESS plan accordingly. After-action reviews can include culturally sensitive methods such as the examples below. Share these lessons with other ESS teams, community partners and EMCR.

- [The Circle Way](#)
- [Appreciative Inquiry](#)
- [The Virtues Project](#) student cards

Appendix E – Virtual work environments

Many ESS functions can be performed remotely by utilizing telephones and/or the ERA tool. Responders can contribute to remote operations over the phone or via email using Indigenous governing body or local authority email accounts.

Protecting responder and evacuee personal information remains a priority while delivering ESS remotely. Indigenous governing body or local authority email accounts should be used in all correspondence with evacuees and EMCR. Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities are responsible to provide access to appropriate email accounts.

EMCR supports the delivery of ESS forms to suppliers by digital methods in support of virtual work environments. All electronic files must be sent in PDF format (see the [ESS Expenditure and Payment Process](#) section for details). Responders are not to send any ERA referrals directly to an evacuee, these must instead be printed off and provided to the evacuee or sent directly to the supplier. This includes emailing ERA generated PDFs or scans of paper forms to evacuees and EMCR Finance as required.

ESS functions which may be performed virtually include:

- Conducting evacuee registration
- Providing referrals to suppliers and Intrerac e-Transfers to evacuees (through the use of ERA)
- Performing needs assessments
- Coordinating supplier supports
- Providing information
- Supporting host community ESS teams remotely (see [Remote Mutual Aid guidelines](#) in the ESS [Resource Hub](#))
- Facilitating access to partner agencies for provision of emotional support

The following suggestions may help facilitate the use of virtual work environments:

- Ensure responders are aware of the team's policy or direction on supporting virtual work environments (including use of personal phones)
- Maintain regular communication to keep members engaged, provide supports and develop awareness of the current situation
- Assess whether your team has enough dedicated phone lines
- Ensure internet access is available from remote work locations
- Ensure responders have access to ESS forms
- Develop documentation methods to support responders
- Ensure responders have the tools and knowledge to send PDF referral forms electronically
- Assess what other tools might be required to offer virtual service

- Ensure responders have access to Indigenous governing body or local authority email accounts for correspondence with suppliers and evacuees. Responders may use their personal computers if they have access to these email accounts
- Consider initiating a call centre model during larger responses
- As virtual environments present a communication barrier to many, ESS responders should ensure they are mindful of cultural safety and humility practices

Appendix F – Evacuee medication

During an evacuation an evacuee may lose access to important prescribed medication. If individuals have health concerns, they must contact their health care provider or emergency medical services.

Guidance for ESS responders

When assisting evacuees with medication needs, be aware that:

- ESS responders must **not** ask about or record medical details (such as medical condition or medication type). This is to comply with the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act and to avoid any consequences from this information being entered into the ESS system.
- ESS Referrals cannot be approved for prescription medication.
- If an evacuee asks about medication needs, you can direct the evacuee to go to a pharmacy and ask for an emergency prescription refill.
- Pharmacists can provide patients with an emergency supply of prescription drugs for continuity of care in exceptional circumstances². Find more information about this from [HealthLink BC](#) and the Province's [Patient care during states of emergency and evacuations](#) page.

Evacuees who have been under an evacuation order for an extended period of time may require more support than an emergency prescription refill. In these cases, you can:

- Provide the evacuee with the **Emergency BC PharmaCare Coverage for B.C. Evacuees** form. This form can be found on the ESS Resource Hub.
- Confirm their ESS file number for the form.

Evacuees can take this form into their pharmacist for further PharmaCare coverage. This form is only available for evacuees under evacuation order.

² Per the College of Pharmacists of B.C. Professional Practice Policy 31, in accordance with the Pharmacy Operations and Drug Scheduling Act Bylaws section 19(7)(d).

Appendix G – Provincial service delivery in large-scale evacuations

The Province offers two service delivery options for providing ESS to evacuees during large-scale events:

BC Evacuee Helpline

The BC Evacuee Helpline is a provincial call centre managed by Service BC, established by the Ministry of Citizens' Services in partnership with the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness. It provides year-round general emergency information to the public, including support for BC Services Card App authentication.

When activated, the BC Evacuee Helpline expands its capability to directly support evacuees province-wide, enabling evacuees to access ESS supports through ERA via Interac e-Transfer.

The Helpline's expanded capability is activated for specific large-scale evacuation events. A provincial bulletin will be issued announcing the activation and subsequent shutdown dates.

If communities require BC Evacuee Helpline's expanded capability and it is not already activated they should submit a Resource Request to the PREOC.

ESS self-service

The ESS self-service function is a separate provincial function within ERA, allowing evacuees to directly access ESS support through Interac e-Transfer. This function is event-driven and activated for large-scale evacuations.

Communities seeking to activate the self-service pathway within ERA should request through their Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC), in consultation with their Regional Response Officer (RRO). Once approved, the self-service option will be enabled by task number for the specific event. The self-service pathway is event-specific and only remains active for the duration of the specific evacuation event it was activated for.

Common requirements for both provincial functions

To access ESS supports through either the BC Evacuee Helpline or self-service pathway, the following requirements must be met:

1. The community must have submitted the evacuation order to EMCR through their regional office or the PREOC.
2. The evacuee must be a B.C. resident whose primary residence is currently under an evacuation order and who requires ESS support.



3. The evacuee must have an ERA profile linked to their BC Services Card App to receive Interac e-Transfer payments.
4. The evacuee must have a valid bank account capable of receiving Interac e-Transfers.

Both provincial service delivery functions provide direct ESS financial supports through ERA's Interac e-Transfer capability. They do not provide ESS referrals. Evacuees requiring referrals to services (e.g. accommodation, meals, clothing) must contact the local ESS team or reception centre identified in their evacuation order.