

CABINET INFORMATION DOCUMENT

MINISTER:

HONOURABLE RICH COLEMAN, MINISTER OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND SOLICITOR GENERAL

IDENTIFIER NUMBER:

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TITLE:

PROVINCIAL EMERGENCY PROGRAM – SENIOR OFFICIAL'S EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN.

Introduction

- As Minister responsible for the Provincial Emergency Program, I am pleased to be able to address Cabinet on this issue of major importance to the safety of British Columbians.
- The September 11th terrorist attack demonstrated once again that British Columbia could suddenly and unexpectedly be impacted by a major emergency or disaster.
- Each of us must be prepared and the province must maintain an emergency management structure capable of immediate activation.
- The integrated emergency response model now employed in BC is the most cost effective and efficient in Canada.
- In a disaster, British Columbians must be able to look to government for leadership and direction.
- Today, I will outline the role we each have in supporting an effective provincial emergency response.

Binder

- Each of you received a binder several weeks ago, titled, "A Senior Officials Emergency Action Plan," for major emergencies.
- The binder contains important information on the role of cabinet in an emergency and details what you need to do in a major emergency. I trust that you have had an opportunity to read the document and would encourage you to keep it as a ready reference.

Wallet Card

- Enclosed with the binder is a wallet card that contains telephone numbers which you might require following a sudden unexpected emergency.

Ministerial Responsibilities

- I will now outline the responsibilities that we each have. These are defined in more detail in the binder.
- In order to best respond to a sudden unexpected major emergency, Ministers must be prepared in five areas:
 1. *Have an individual and family emergency plan*
 - It is important that you have a family plan so that you can be assured that your own family is safe and that you can turn your focus to dealing with the disaster.

2. *Review your key ministry responsibilities under the Emergency Program Act*
 - Each ministry is assigned a specific role under the Emergency Program Act. You must clearly understand the role of your ministry in an emergency and make sure that plans are in place to ensure an effective response.
3. *Insure that your ministry remains prepared to support "Mission Critical Government Services" such as emergency social services and children's services*
 - One of the most important initial tasks during a disaster is to ensure the comfort and safety of those immediately affected. They will require such things as emergency shelter, food and counselling.
4. *Effective workplace preparedness plans*
 - Disasters can hit while most people are at work. We need to look after the health and safety of our staff. Therefore, we need to have workplace plans.
5. *A current Business Continuation Plan*
 - As Ministers we need to make sure that government can continue or get back into business quickly after a disaster.

Emergency Response

- When a flood or earthquake hits, pre-approved emergency plans will be automatically activated
- The Provincial Emergency Program, along with response ministries, will activate operations centres and begin directing response operations. These centres are equipped and located in Victoria, Vancouver, Kamloops, Nelson, Prince George and Terrace.
- Our role as Cabinet will be to support and provide direction to the response effort.
- Your home phone and cell phone will not work. You can make contact with PEP by means of any of 400 amateur radio operators, or by using satellite phones located in every PEP and Ministry of Transportation district office.
- Provincial Emergency Operations Centres, operated by PEP, can help. They will accept and distribute messages upon request. This is a critical service in the event that government must relocate.
- The ability of the government to provide information to the public is critical to maintain public confidence. The Public Affairs Bureau, in partnership with PEP, has an Emergency Public Information Plan and may call upon you to make public statements.

BC Emergency Management Structure

- The chart in your books (and on screen) outlines the different parts and levels of government involved in an emergency. Specifically, it shows the role of cabinet or an ad hoc committee of cabinet.
- Depending on the hazard, I will be calling on specific Ministers to work with me in directing a response. This would include for example, the Ministers of Health, Human Resources and Forests.
- I may also make a request for federal support which would include troops and help from other provinces.

Declaration/ Disaster Financial Assistance

- A declaration would only be made when the province requires extraordinary powers, such as evacuation and restriction of access to an area. Historically, the only provincial state of emergency ever declared related to the 1998 Salmon Arm fires.
- Disaster assistance is often provided by government following a disaster. For example, disaster financial assistance is being provided in the Peace River region which recently experienced damage from flooding. It must be noted that the payment of disaster assistance is not dependent upon a declaration of emergency.

Closing

- BC will be subject to a major earthquake at some time in the future. In 1948, we had an 8.1 magnitude earthquake in the Queen Charlotte Islands. The recent 7.3 magnitude earthquake in Turkey resulted in 17,000 deaths.
- Plans are in place to respond, and my ministry, in cooperation with other ministries, has made significant progress in improving both the level of preparedness and the readiness capability of government.
- Mervin Harrower, the Director of PEP, is prepared to support your ministry by providing subject matter expertise, presentations, or tours of any of the Provincial Emergency Operations Centres. (PEOCs)
- PEP encourages your ministry to make use of the provincial EOCs for training or any hazard-specific response.
- The citizens of BC, all levels of government and non-government agencies share responsibility for preparedness. By working together we can enhance safety and reduce the social and economic impact of any major disaster.