

From: Community Engagement <Community.Engagement@albertahealthservices.ca>
Sent: Friday, May 24, 2024 11:46 AM
To: Community Engagement <Community.Engagement@albertahealthservices.ca>
Subject: Follow-up: AHS needs and considerations for evacuations

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon,

One of the key points discussed during the wildfire conversations with community leaders on March 19 and 21 was the need for greater understanding of AHS' needs and considerations when evacuating healthcare facilities. Likewise, the decisions that need to be made and the work that is required when re-entering healthcare facilities following evacuations has not been well communicated with our community partners.

We have therefore pulled together some information that we thought may be helpful to you, as you prepare for potential future evacuations. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this information further, please do not hesitate to reach out – we would be happy to schedule additional conversations to ensure that we are working from the same understandings.

We have also created a project page on AHS' virtual engagement platform [Together4Health](#) to make our regular Disaster Rounds available to you, our community partners. Visit [AHS Disaster Rounds](#) to learn with AHS leaders and staff.

As we developed these resources we were reminded of the importance of clear communication and collaboration. If you find yourself in an evacuation situation, please ensure you connect with AHS early to share your needs to allow time for a discussion on expectations. Likewise, please connect when you begin to consider re-entry into your community following evacuation.

Our 24/7 contact for all external partners to alert AHS in the event of a municipal or industry emergency incident is 1-844-755-1788.

As a reminder, your local AHS zone emergency management contacts are:

	Zone EDM General Email	Zone EDM Contact	
North	EDM.North@ahs.ca	Russ Nelson	Russ.Nelson@ahs.ca
Edmonton	EDM.Edmonton@ahs.ca	Eric Lobay	Eric.Lobay@ahs.ca
Central	EDM.Centraloncall@ahs.ca	Ken Hoffer	Ken.Hoffer@ahs.ca
Calgary	EDM.Calgary@ahs.ca	Tom Watts	Thomas.Watts@ahs.ca
South	EDM.South@ahs.ca	Jeff Dutton	Jeffrey.Dutton@ahs.ca

For general inquiries and to notify AHS when a municipal EOC is established, email: edp@ahs.ca.

We are committed to working together to meet the health and safety needs of residents, particularly those most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

Stacy Greening
Chief Zone Officer, North Zone Clinical Operations

Cheryl Bourassa
Executive Director, Emergency Disaster Management



Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.

From: Community Engagement <Community.Engagement@albertahealthservices.ca>
Sent: Monday, March 25, 2024 4:49 PM
To: Community Engagement <Community.Engagement@albertahealthservices.ca>
Subject: Thank-you for attending a Conversation with AHS about Healthcare and Wildfire Response

Good afternoon,

Thank you for joining our conversations about AHS' wildfire response. As we prepare for what we expect to be another busy wildfire season, we are keenly aware of how important it is to work with our community partners to respond to wildfires in our province. While our area of responsibility is healthcare, we know that the work we do - including the evacuation of healthcare facilities - impacts your planning and response.

The slides from the presentation are attached. We are also following up on a few excellent points that were shared, such as the need to work more collaboratively with Indigenous communities' command centres, and the request for an outline of the resources and information that AHS requires during community evacuations.

When I reflect on our conversations, three themes come to mind:

1. **Communication:** we need to ensure that we are in close, constant communication with our municipal, Indigenous and community partners to ensure we are meeting the needs of the people we serve.
2. **Role clarity:** local communities want to better understand the role of AHS and other healthcare providers, to ensure that resources are appropriately allocated to serve the most vulnerable among us.
3. **Partnership:** healthcare is a team sport, and we need to establish partnerships as we plan and prepare, so that we are best positioned to meet the needs of residents during emergencies.

As requested, here are your zone Emergency/Disaster Management (EDM) contacts. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your zone contact for EDM inquiries, as you develop your community emergency response plan, or to access AHS resources. If you have general questions about the health system or services available please reach out to your local or site based contact.

North: Russ Nelson Russ.Nelson@albertahealthservices.ca

Edmonton: Eric Lobay Eric.Lobay@albertahealthservices.ca

Central: Ken Hoffer Ken.Hoffer@albertahealthservices.ca

Calgary: Tom Watts Thomas.Watts@albertahealthservices.ca

South: Jeff Dutton Jeffrey.Dutton@albertahealthservices.ca

We also have a 24/7 contact for all external partners to alert AHS in the event of a municipal or industry emergency incident:

Phone: 1-844-755-1788

Email: edp@albertahealthservices.ca

Finally, if you have any follow up questions or comments - or would like to arrange a conversation in your community or with a particular area of the healthcare system - please email community.engagement@ahs.ca. We would be happy to coordinate such a meeting for you.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to meeting the needs of your community.

Sincerely,

Stacy Greening

Chief Zone Officer, North Zone Clinical Operations



Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.

This message and any attached documents are only for the use of the intended recipient(s), are confidential and may contain privileged information. Any unauthorized review, use, retransmission, or other disclosure is strictly prohibited. If you have received this message in error, please notify the sender immediately, and then delete the original message. Thank you.

Preparation & Collaboration with Communities During a Wildfire Response

Alberta Health Services (AHS) is committed to working with our partners through all phases of emergency management. Cooperation, communication, and inter-agency collaboration are essential to meeting the healthcare needs of our patients, clients and residents before, during and after emergency response.

AHS is aware that both the evacuation of communities and public re-entry after an evacuation can be contingent on access to health care services. It is therefore our desire to engage with communities early and often to ensure that both evacuation and repatriation efforts are planned collaboratively. This process starts with a shared understanding of the complexities associated with evacuating and re-opening healthcare facilities.

Planning and Preparing for an Emergency

Effective emergency management begins with planning and preparing for emergency situations. AHS' Emergency Disaster Management Team (EDM) seeks opportunities for information sharing, joint training and collaborative exercises.

Join [AHS Disaster Rounds](#) to learn with AHS leaders and staff. Connect with your Zone EDM contact for planning and preparedness related work, such as joint emergency training exercises in your community.

	Zone EDM General Email	Zone EDM Contact
North	EDM.North@ahs.ca	Russ Nelson Russ.Nelson@ahs.ca
Edmonton	EDM.Edmonton@ahs.ca	Eric Lobay Eric.Lobay@ahs.ca
Central	EDM.Centraloncall@ahs.ca	Ken Hoffer Ken.Hoffer@ahs.ca
Calgary	EDM.Calgary@ahs.ca	Tom Watts Thomas.Watts@ahs.ca
South	EDM.South@ahs.ca	Jeff Dutton Jeffrey.Dutton@ahs.ca

Visit [AHS Zone Map](#) to confirm which zone your community falls within.

Establishing Emergency Operations Centres

In order to ensure collaboration with communities in all aspects of wildfire response, AHS should be notified when a municipal EOC is established through the Emergency Disaster Management (EDM) email: edp@ahs.ca.

Our 24/7 contact for all external partners to alert AHS in the event of a municipal or industry emergency incident is 1-844-755-1788.

Impacted communities are notified when AHS establishes a Zone Emergency Operations Centres (ZEOCs) and provided with contact information for the dedicated Liaison Officer. AHS ZEOCs communicate with their local municipal Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) to access status updates and assess the health needs of impacted communities during emergency situations.

Evacuation of Healthcare Facilities

As wildfires are unpredictable, the situation and threat can change quickly. AHS monitors the status of wildfires including location, physical and timed distance from local communities, evacuation orders, numbers of evacuees, Alberta Emergency Alerts and weather patterns.

When a health or continuing care facility is in a wildfire's possible path, AHS takes several proactive actions:

- Create a census of patients and residents to determine needs and mobility,
- Determine how long it would take to evacuate each patient, resident and staff member with the available resources,
- Assess safe, accessible transportation corridors,

Preparation & Collaboration with Communities During a Wildfire Response

- Put transportation (EMS, handibuses, etc.) on standby, and
- Identify and prepare receiving sites.

Given the potential for the situation to change quickly and the time it takes to move patients from a hospital, AHS may reduce the number of patients and residents in a location with proactive voluntary relocation of those with higher needs, such as respiratory conditions and mobility limitations.

Based on the assessment and consideration for the safety of patients and residents, proactive relocation may occur before a mandatory evacuation order is issued for the community. In such cases, AHS aims to retain emergency services within the community or region to meet the emergency needs of community members and first responders - when safe to do so and human resources allow.

AHS works closely with provincial and municipal partners before making any decision to proceed with a facility evacuation. Any decisions to evacuate patients and residents from a wildfire area are made to ensure the safety of our patients, residents, staff and physicians.

Reopening Healthcare Facilities

Every healthcare facility evacuation is different, and every impacted healthcare facility will have different needs to ensure a safe re-opening. Connect with AHS early in the planning process for lifting a community's evacuation orders so we are able work collaboratively on the timing of service resumption. We aim to re-open our facilities as quickly as possible, but only when it is safe to do so.

Reopening healthcare facilities is complex: patient care areas must be inspected and cleaned, and garbage and food waste removed to ensure a clean, sterile environment. Staff also replenish supplies and recalibrate equipment. As required we address damage caused by the wildfire or wildfire prevention activities, such as smoke or water damage, prior to re-opening a facility.

Health facilities are re-opened in stages as staff return to the community and each area of the facility is determined to be safe and prepared for use. AHS focuses on first opening health services that support the initial community re-entry, such as emergency departments, laboratory and diagnostic imaging.

The reopening process can be delayed if staff are not available to return to the community because, for example, they have evacuated with their families and need to travel back into the community, their home is not habitable, or they have a need to secure childcare prior to returning to work.

Repatriation

AHS' priority is to bring patients and residents home as quickly and safely as possible. To ensure their comfort and safety, evacuated patients and residents will continue to be cared for at other sites until the danger posed by wildfire activity has passed and arrangements can be made for safe return to their home community, without risk of a subsequent re-evacuation.

Repatriation takes time depending on the wildfire situation in each community, each individual's care needs, and available modes of transportation. Because of the unpredictable nature of wildfires, AHS will not send patients to a facility in an area that is facing a wildfire threat. Patients will be transferred when AHS and the municipality are confident the wildfire will not impact the facility.

Local healthcare leaders ensure ongoing communication with patients and their families. Generally once conditions permit and transportation is arranged, staff will work to repatriate those with lower care needs, followed by those with greater care needs. This is to ensure that all the needs of patients can be met during the process of repatriation.

Preparation & Collaboration with Communities During a Wildfire Response

Resources

AHS and Alberta government resources are available to communities and residents to assess their personal health risk and to help protect themselves and their families during wildfire season, when preparing for evacuation, or planning to return to an evacuated community.

Mental Health Supports

[Help in tough times](#)

[Preparing Emotionally for Disasters or Emergencies](#)

[Wildfire Smoke and Your Mental Health](#)

Public Health Supports

[Coping with Emergencies](#)

[Wildfire Smoke and Your Health](#)

[Heat Warning Information](#)

Emergency Resources

[Emergency preparedness](#)

[Wildfire Resources](#)

[Flooding resources and safety information](#)

[Air Quality Events](#)

[Active Health Advisories](#)

Evacuation Resources

[Preparing to Evacuate](#)

[AHS Reception Centre Plan for Municipalities](#)

[Reopening Buildings, Homes, and Businesses After Wildfire](#)

[Returning to Your Home after a Wildfire](#)



Single Point of Contact for Emergency Incidents

Single point of contact for all external partners to alert AHS
in the event of a municipal / industry **emergency incident**:

24/7 phone: 1-844-755-1788

e-mail: edp@ahs.ca

If you require an immediate response, please call rather than email.

Single point of contact for **emergency incidents**:

- Is not to be used for routine business where there are established local processes for reporting
- Does not replace 9-1-1 process for contacting EMS
- Does not replace existing situational awareness reporting processes in place with government ministries/agencies