

Community Emergency Preparedness Fund

Evacuation Route Planning

2020 Application Form

Please complete and return the application form by April 17, 2020. All questions are required to be answered by typing directly in this form. If you have any questions, contact cepf@ubcm.ca or (250) 387-4470.

SECTION 1: Applicant Information	AP <i>(for administrative use only)</i>
Name of Local Government or First Nation: City of Merritt	Date of Application: March 19, 2020
Contact Person*: Sky McKeown	Position: Recreation Manager & EOC Liaison
Phone: 250-378-8618	E-mail: smckeown@merritt.ca

* Contact person must be an authorized representative of the applicant.

SECTION 2: For <u>Regional Projects Only</u>
1. Identification of Partnering Applicants. For all regional projects, please list all of the partnering eligible applicants included in this application. Refer to Section 2 in the Program & Application Guide for eligibility. City of Merritt
2. Rationale for Regional Projects. Please provide a rationale for submitting a regional application and describe how this approach will support cost-efficiencies in the total grant request. N/A

SECTION 3: Project Summary
3. Name of the Project: City of Merritt Evacuation Plan 2020
4. Project Cost & Grant Request: Total Project Cost: \$24,000.00 Total Grant Request: \$18,412.50 Have you applied for, or received funding for, this project from other sources?

No other funding has been applied for.

It is estimated that Merritt City Staff time regarding: gathering information, ground truthing, administrative assistance, in-kind facility rentals, and plan testing/evaluations will add up to \$5,587.50.

5. Project Summary. Provide a summary of your project in 150 words or less.

The current emergency plan dated 2006 is in need of updating. Elements of it touch on general activities related to evacuation, but there is no specific information on procedures, roles and responsibilities related to community evacuation, or support to other communities.

This project will create an evacuation planning and operations framework for the City of Merritt. It will deliver operational business practices that enable EOC support for larger scale evacuations. It will also deliver scalable solutions for larger multi-agency, multi-community events. Among its other hazard, risk, and vulnerability assessment (HRVA) identified threats, Merritt can experience challenges around flood, wildfire and hazardous materials threats.

Merritt sits at the confluence of two rivers, which creates challenges and threats related to flooding and backing effects, as well as early spring ice jams, back in to the low lying areas of the community.

It is located in a fire dependent forest ecosystem in one of the busiest wildfire zones in southern BC; a problem that is exacerbated by seasonal lightning and a long-term arson problem in the broader area at times.

Merritt also sits at the confluence of three highways, two of which are part of the Coquihalla system and among the busiest in BC. These highways experience motor vehicles accidents with large transport trucks almost daily, many of which carry hazardous materials.

We have experienced several evacuations from flood in recent years, and have been on alert for wildfires as well.

6. Emergency Plan. Describe the extent to which the proposed project will specifically support recommendations or requirements identified in the local Emergency Plan.

To date, we have activated our emergency plan to support local evacuations primarily through the EOC and ESS program. Merritt is the local "hub" community, and we are also able to activate our plan to support neighbouring First Nations and municipal communities as needed. The current plan contains some basic response checklists by specific incident types, including flood, fire and hazmat, but nothing prescriptive or specific to roles, responsibilities and actions related to evacuation.

The emergency plan contains minimum information on evacuation. It identifies the three stages (alert, order, & rescind) and lists some general considerations. It does not specify roles & responsibilities or business practices related to pre-planning, implementation and demobilization of an evacuation. This evacuation plan will be a supplement to the existing emergency plan that integrates with the EOC support practices, and will provide an action-based flow chart and checklist model to address all elements of a small or large scale evacuation.

The current plan contains some information on flood preparedness & response, but this is dated January 2010. A GIS analysis in 2011 established baseline population numbers but the current emergency plan does not reflect this. As a function of updating the total community population numbers at risk for evacuation, this plan will estimate new numbers for potential impacted populations.

The BC Wildfire Service has recently released GIS data on the wildland urban interface fire threat, and the perimeter areas of Merritt are at high and extreme risk. The current emergency plan has a general checklist on what to do if there is a wildfire, but it has no specific information on any business practices related to evacuation. It will also provide some triggers that can guide evacuation planning and decision making, as well as some specific activities related to both tactical and strategic decision making around wildfire.

This evacuation plan will contain necessary reference information but will not duplicate what exists in the community emergency plan. It will also contain action-oriented business practices that are designed such that a staff member with little or no training should be able to perform the necessary activities to meet the minimum needs of their EOC position:

- action and decision based flow chart to guide the evacuation process
- checklists for the stages of evacuation roles & responsibilities for Mayor, CAO, EPC, and the key ICS EOC positions
- checklists for the key activities related to the evacuation stages, including pre-planning and re-entry planning
- condensed guides for each of Mayor, CAO, and EPC that outline their critical "must do" activities in the first hour of an evacuation, and that are designed to be readily available to them digitally and in hard copy 24/7
- checklists that allow external parties, such as a neighbouring CAO or EPC, to perform an operational audit in concert with the EOC Director as a "check and balance" approach

SECTION 4: Detailed Project Information

7. Proposed Activities. What specific activities will be undertaken as part of the proposed project? Please refer to Section 4 of the Program & Application Guide for eligibility.

Phase 1 - Initial scoping research and data collection related to existing plans, agency responsibilities and the Hazard, Risk & Vulnerability Analysis (HRVA); initial consult with stakeholder agencies around their mandates and capabilities

Phase 2 - prepare initial draft of evacuation plan and GIS mapped routes for review by City staff and stakeholder agencies; solicit and include feedback in any revisions

Phase 3 - test plan against a multi-stakeholder table top exercise; incorporate feedback and learnings into revision for final draft

Phase 4 - present final evacuation route plan and associated products

8. Evidence & Rationale. What is the rationale and evidence for undertaking this project? This may include local hazards identified in the Emergency Plan; threat levels identified in Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Analysis, Community Wildfire Protection/Resiliency Plans, and/or Flood Risk Assessments; and previous emergencies where evacuations were ordered.

The current emergency plan is dated 2006 and in need of updating. It contains some general descriptive information on flood preparedness & response, but this is dated January 2010, and contains no specific or information on how to support an evacuation.

The BC Wildfire Service has recently released GIS data on the wildland urban interface fire threat, and the perimeter areas of Merritt are at high and extreme risk. Heavy fuel loading in surrounding forests, along with the heavier winds that can funnel through the Merritt area and natural and person caused fire starts combine to create a high probability of threat from wildfire. Motor vehicle accidents and historical arson activity in the area also increase that threat. There has been several large wildfires in the broader area historically, but to date nothing significant requiring strategic evacuations. The current emergency plan has a general checklist on what to do if there is a wildfire, but it has no specific information on any business practices related to evacuation.

The local MOTI traffic data for the Coquihalla Highway shows peak days in excess of 25,000 vehicles passing within the municipal boundary of Merritt. The stretch of Coquihalla Highway in close proximity to Merritt has experienced hundreds of motor vehicle incidents since it opened. The types and volumes of hazardous materials that pass through Merritt daily are not public knowledge, and therefore represent an unknown and real risk. Depending on wind conditions, it is reasonable to expect that an incident on the highway could require sudden evacuation of some areas of the community.

The Nicola River flows through a good section of the downtown section of Merritt before it meets the Coldwater River. The confluence of these two rivers has historically been the source of water backing effects causing flooding, as well as a location of large ice jams that have also caused flooding. A GIS analysis in 2011 also identified as many as 424 homes and 1680 people in the downtown area could be impacted by the 200 year flood levels, and there is some general indication from the 2017 floods in the area that the numbers could be higher as a function of the new flood levels and population growth in the community. The Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) maintains a control gate at the south end of Nicola Lake where they release water into the Nicola River for fisheries management primarily. While they make every attempt to manage for flood impacts in the community, the conditions of the spring freshet sometimes require them to release volumes that flood residential and commercial properties. The City has no control over this. More recently in 2017 and 2018, there has been evacuation alerts for several residences, and orders for a seniors housing complex and some residences. There has been flood and ice jam threats several times in the past 20 years or so to residential and commercial areas.

The annual budget for the City emergency program, not including Fire Services, is \$8500. The UBCM funding cap of \$25,000 for evacuation planning represents more than 2.5 times the annual budget for the City emergency program of \$8,500, not including Fire Services. The City has a relatively small tax base generated from its approximately 7,200 residents.

- 9. Existing Challenges.** How will the proposed project identify and address existing challenges to successful evacuations in the event of emergencies. Refer to Section 6 of the Program and Application Guide.

Merritt is geographically positioned to provide support to 6 neighbouring First nations communities and a local municipality. In order to support these area communities, and accommodate multiple support agencies during larger events, sound planning and an existing community EOC structure need to be in place. The current EM plan does not provide detailed organizational planning around a larger evacuation and managing the surge capacity of supporting parties, or does it elaborate on how to provide support to other communities.

Staff & Capacity - Merritt has no dedicated staff for emergency management activities, outside municipal composite fire services and regional road rescue. It operates on a relatively small tax base with minimum levels of staffing. Very few of our staff were trained or engaged in emergency response and recovery activities. We currently don't have staff capacity to operate an EOC in support of a large evacuation for extended periods of time, so it is critical that those few that we do have are trained and know their roles in supporting an evacuation within a structured plan.

Pre-planning around traffic management, vulnerable populations and domestic livestock is also not part of the current EM plan. Traffic flow patterns on the main feeder routes are generally known, but not captured for evacuation planning purposes. Vulnerable populations are approximately known, but have not been confirmed for community level evacuations. There is no planning in place for domestic livestock evacuation at this time.

- 10. Large Scale ESS Planning.** Describe the extent to which the proposed project will consider large scale Emergency Support Services scenarios.

Merritt maintains its own small volunteer ESS program and when local capacity is exceeded, higher levels of support can be requested through neighbouring communities and/or EMBC. To scale the team to meet the needs of larger disaster events, a structured evacuation support plan needs to be in place. This evacuation plan will be fully scalable to manage significantly larger events under the Incident Command System (ICS), and will enable multi-agency, inter-community support models. It will also establish the operational framework for providing support to neighbouring First Nations and municipal communities, as well as to the Thompson Nicola Regional District (TNRD), District of Logan Lake, and the Province if need be.

- 11. Transferability.** Describe the extent to which the proposed project may be transferable to other local governments and/or First Nations.

Merritt, Logan Lake, and the TNRD currently do not have a formal agreement in place for evacuation support but each government has indicated willingness to support as able at the request of either, or EMBC. This extends to some of the local First Nations communities as well.

There is currently a conversation underway, initiated by the TNRD, with surrounding First Nations and Municipal communities about the possibilities of mutual aid and/or resource sharing models. It is in early stages and this evacuation plan will form the foundation for most of what that conversation will be about. It will inform the need for

standardized local business practices and training, inter-community exercises, and supporting cultural differences.

There are a number of stakeholder agencies that should have facility evacuation plans, including health facilities, schools and senior's housing to name a few. These agencies are not readily integrated in to local community emergency and evacuation planning. This plan will be socialized to those organizations so that they can evaluate their existing plans, and determine appropriate steps to become more integrated.

12. Evaluation. How will the project be evaluated? How will performance measures and/or benchmarks be used to measure outcomes? How will this information be used?

The general workplan has 4 milestones. Each milestone has deliverables associated with it. Success of the evacuation plan development will be based on submission or demonstration of completion of each of those deliverables, and approval by a representative of both local governments. Final payment to the consultant will not be issued until both reps agree on substantial completion.

13. Additional Information. Please share any other information you think may help support your submission.

We anticipate that a well structured and planned evacuation could actually save the Province money in the future in terms of direct response support costs through clarity of roles and responsibilities, and better pre-planning around actual resources required. We believe that developing a sound evacuation plan and then communicating it as part of our community preparedness program will help minimize trauma on evacuated residents.

SECTION 5: Required Application Materials

Only complete applications will be considered for funding. The following separate attachments are required to be submitted as part of the application:

- ☐ Local government Council or Board resolution, Band Council resolution or Treaty First Nation resolution, indicating support for the current proposed activities and willingness to provide overall grant management.
- ☐ Detailed budget for each component identified in the application. This must clearly identify the CEPF funding request, applicant contribution, and/or other grant funding.
- ☐ For regional projects only: local government Council or Board resolution, Band Council resolution or Treaty First Nation resolution from each partnering applicant that clearly states their approval for the primary applicant to apply for, receive and manage the grant funding on their behalf.

SECTION 6: Signature

I certify that: (1) to the best of my knowledge, all information is accurate and (2) the area covered by the proposed project is within our local authority's jurisdiction (or appropriate approvals are in place).	
Name: SKy McKeown	Title: Recreation Manager & EOC Liaison
Signature: <i>An electronic or original signature is required.</i>	Date: 19 March 2020

Submit applications to Local Government Program Services, Union of BC Municipalities

E-mail: cepf@ubcm.ca

Mail: 525 Government Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 0A8