



**Central Peace Regional Emergency Management Committee
Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, November 23, 2023

6:30 p.m.

**Brownlee Building
MD of Spirit River**

PRESENT: Denay Bjornson, Birch Hills County *Left the meeting at 7:50 p.m.*
 Tom Morgan, Birch Hills County Fire Chief *Left the meeting at 7:36 p.m. Attended electronically.*
 Dianne Nellis, MD of Spirit River
 Nick van Rootselaar, MD of Spirit River
 Tracy Lapping, Town of Spirit River
 Wayne Meyer, Town of Spirit River
 Brenda Stanich, Town of Spirit River
 Don Hoffart, Saddle Hills County
 Cary Merritt, Saddle Hills County
 Brice Daly, Saddle Hills County
 Peter Thomas, Village of Rycroft
 Roxann Dreger, Village of Rycroft
 Chris Graham, AEMA
 Mackenzie Tidd, Alberta Health Services Public Health
 Russ Nelson, Director of Emergency Disaster Alberta Health Services *Attended electronically.*
 Ryan Squires, Alberta Health Services
 Bernadette Gordon, ATCO
 Shelley Abram, ATCO
 Rick Hoddinott, Alberta Forestry & Parks
 Rob Galon, Alberta Forestry & Parks
 Brian Kroes, Central Peace Fire and Rescue
 Lorne Johnson, EPA
 Debi Cardwell, Victim Services
 Emily Bolch, Recording Secretary

ALSO PRESENT: N/A

1. CALL TO ORDER:

1.1 Call to Order
 Meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m.

2. AGENDA:

2.a. Adoption of Agenda
 MOVED by Roxann Dreger
That the agenda for the November 23, 2023 Central Peace Regional Emergency Management Committee Meeting be adopted as presented.

Carried Unanimously

3. ADOPTION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:

3.a. Minutes of the March 16, 2022 CPREM Committee Meeting
 MOVED by Don Hoffart
That the minutes of the March 16, 2023 Central Peace Regional Emergency Management Committee Meeting be adopted as presented.

Carried Unanimously

4. ADMINISTRATION

4.a. Regional Emergency Management Plan Updates

Housekeeping changes to the plan will be made by replacing pages, but major updates to the plan will be made by replacing the entire binder. Birch Hills County has a new Ward 3 Councillor, Denay Bjornson. This change will be made in the plan, and the update sent out.

4.b. Notification of CPHC ER Closure

There have been Emergency Room closures at Spirit River Hospital when there is little to no physician coverage. Brice inquired about notification for these closures. Ryan Squires will reach out to the communications team and request that this information be circulated to CPREM, as well as review who is currently on the notification list. Discussed the Voyent Alert! app, and how it would be useful for circulating hospital closures to residents.

4.c. CP-REM Website & Social Media Platforms

Monica Randell, Communications Coordinator for Saddle Hills County, looks after Saddle Hills County communications as well as the CPREM website and social media. She would like to add X and Instagram to the CPREM social media portfolio, as well as make some changes to the CPREM website. Don Hoffart commented that the more access to information in various locations the better, as not everyone accesses every form of media. Chris Graham pointed out that getting followers on multiple platforms may be difficult, and to build this into a crisis communication plan. There was general agreeance to create X and Instagram pages for CPREM, and to make the changes to the CPREM website.

4.d. CP-REM 2023 Budget

Brice reviewed the distributed proposed budget and highlighted what each line was for. Provincial training grants may be available from time to time. Training includes workshops for new members, tabletop exercises - one in the west and one in east – as well as a regional exercise. Salaries were slightly reduced as administrative support is part time now, versus full time in the past.

Costs are split five (5) ways, 20% per municipality. For 2023 that amounts to \$8,545.52 each. Brenda asked how money is collected. Brice answered that Saddle Hills County invoices the other municipalities. Brice will send out the requisitions tomorrow, November 24, 2023.

MOVED by Roxann Dreger

That 2023 CP-REM budget be adopted as presented, and that each of the five (5) municipalities be sent a requisition from Saddle Hills County for \$8,545.52.

Carried Unanimously

5. RESPONSE OPERATIONS

5.a. ECC Activations in 2023

Saddle Hills County had one ECC activation on May 14, 2023 during the South Cecil Fire as a result of issuing evacuation alerts. There were no States of Local Emergency declared for any CPREM partners.

Discussed the Silverwood Fire and its impact. Rycroft said they were on their toes for short period of time during Silverwood fire. They were prepared to act but did not have to issue evacuation alerts.

Brenda Stanich brought up the circulation of false information during the Silverwood Fire, which resulted in the Town of Spirit River purchasing a Voyent Alert! subscription. Brian Kroes noted that there are currently 176 people subscribed out of their 2500 purchased subscriptions. Brian explained what the app is, how it works, and examples of the types of alerts it can be used for. For those without smartphones, they can register on the website to receive the alerts to their landline. Brian also noted that subscriptions are reasonably priced at approximately \$1.51 per subscription per year.

The Town of Spirit River is considering holding an open house for the app to provide training and help with download and set up. Other useful features noted include adding multiple addresses for alerts. Nick van Rootselaar noted the benefits of the app for rural crime watch. Discussed the benefits of sending clear messages with accurate information, without the comments from the public as on social media.

6. RECOVERY PROGRAMS

6.a. Active Disaster Relief Programs (DRPs)

2018 and 2020 Saddle Hills County DRPs are approaching completion. Rycroft's DRP is complete. Dianne Nellis applied for DRP for Silverwood fire, and recently received a letter approving their application. Brice inquired if anyone had applied for Municipal Wildfire Assistance Program (MWAP). Diane answered that they were recommended to apply for DRP over MWAP.

6.b. CRC Supports – 2023 AB Wildfires

Distributed a handout outlining Canadian Red Cross supports for 2023 wildfires. Saddle Hills County did not lose any structures to wildfires in 2023. Two (2) homes were lost in the Silverwood Fire.

7. MITIGATION PROGRAMS

7.a. Wildfire Community Preparedness Day – May 4, 2024

Rick Hoddinott encouraged any community members to take advantage of any grants available for fire smart as an opportunity to become engaged and make properties more defensible. Rick noted that municipalities may apply for educational grant to teach residents how to fire smart their own properties. Residents will be faced with this for the foreseeable future due to lack of snow right now. These are normally an undersubscribed grant. FRIAA would be the other avenue to apply for funding to be more prepared for wildfires.

Nick van Rootselaar noted that MD of Spirit River had FRIAA grant, but out of 32 properties identified as potentially at risk, only four (4) residents asked to be evaluated. The MD of Spirit River advertised extensively, including open houses, letters, newspaper advertisements, etc. Rick replied that low uptake of this program is not uncommon.

Roxann Dreger pointed out that there might be better uptake of the program considering 2023 fire season as relevancy has increased now.

Rick noted that the MD of Spirit River could reapply for FRIAA grant next year and that education on a sustained basis is positive.

8. TRAINING & PREPAREDNESS

8.a. Emergency Management Training

Brice inquired about training needs, and if there were any courses anyone would like offered. Chris Graham explained that Basic Emergency Management and the Municipal Elected Officials courses are very similar and that is not necessary to take both. Chris shared that there will be an Information officer specific course in the new year, as well as a specific Director of Emergency Management course. This course will go out through All-Hazards Incident Management Team (AHIMIT) team and there may be a cost associated with it.

8.b. Online Training Schedule

Paper copies of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) online calendar were distributed.

8.c. Alert Ready

Saddle Hills County currently has three (3) authorized users, and the authorized user from Birch Hills County is now employed at the Town of Spirit River. Bailey Smith at Birch Hills County was planning on taking the training as

well, which is offered online. Dianne Nellis said the MD of Spirit River will look into having a member of their staff complete the training.

8.d. NW AHIMT Membership

The Fall conference call takes place tomorrow to discuss training and exercises. A planning section chief course was planned but had to be cancelled. Anyone who is not a member of NW AHIMT but would like to be, or would like more information, may contact Brice Daly, Brian Kroes, or Tracy Lapping. Required training includes ICS 100, 200, and to be working on ICS 300. Members must commit to block training for 3 or 4 days. Members must have completed Block 3 readiness to be ready to be deployed. The team currently requires a documentation person as a gap exists there.

8.e. Elected Officials Training

Brice asked if anyone changed their Council representee for CPREM. Birch Hills County has new Councillor. Brice can offer a one-on-one course to Denay Bjornson. Elected Officials Training should take place within 90 days.

8.f. ICS 300 January 17 – 19, 2023

Course will be held at Saddle Hills County. Currently there are seven (7) people registered, including people from local industry. Brice will confirm with those people that they are still interested in taking the course.

Chris Graham pointed out that as of January, anyone enrolled in an ICS course will be required to provide their certificate for prerequisites. ICS 200 completed online does not fulfill the prerequisite for ICS 300.

9. REGIONAL EXERCISE

9.a. Tabletop Exercise/Workshop(s)

There is lots of new staff, which means that some people and places have not been exposed to emergency situations. Brice would like to propose a 3-hour session on two (2) different dates at two (2) different locations to practice how CPREM responds to incident affecting multiple partners, the transition from response to recovery, how DRP works, what the role of each member partner would be, how that relates to industry partners. Each training session could focus on different types of incidents, and staff could attend either or both sessions. Brice will send an email to all DEMS with options for dates.

9.b. Functional Exercise

Will take place after tabletop exercise(s).

10. PARTNER AGENCY UPDATES

10.a. AEMA

Chris Graham: Other than training update, status quo. Provincial level after action reports on response to wildfire, and support to NWT. Initiative from NW ESS partnership regarding DRP and funding aspects, so there may be changes coming. Displeasure regarding what hosting communities are getting back in regards to ESS support.

10.b. Other Agencies

Alberta Forestry and Parks:

Rick Hoddinott: Wildfire still on the landscape. Boone Lake Complex fire is still active, and still being reported through 310-FIRE. Alberta Forestry does have scans planned for the spring for that fire. Reclamation/restoration is complete. The reclamation contract for the South Cecil fire is going out. Were able to hire a couple extra support staff.

Rob Galon: Concerned about lack of snow. Some fires may cause issues in Spring 2024, so planning on scanning of fires. Provincially, 2023 has seen unprecedented fire activity, bringing in support teams from all over. 4000% more for evacuations than ever seen in the province. 1.9 million dollars of

mutual aid has signed off on, with more to go. Thanked all the firefighters. Todd Loewen met with Rob and identified 10 areas to work on. Funding and money are a challenge, but the aim is to be at operational readiness for mid April, which means staff will have to begin training in March. Rob would like to double down on tabletop exercises and increase overall knowledge of the system. The forecast for the 2024 fire season is not looking great with drought codes, and there are low water levels across North America.

Victim Services:

Debi Cardwell requested that Ryan Squires add the RCMP to hospital closures notifications. Ryan agreed.

EAP:

Lorne Johnson: Three (3) consequence managers have been hired for drought team for province, and are working on building a northern drought plan

Alberta Health Services:

Ryan Squires: Sent off request to add communications about hospitals. Spirit River Hospital has hired additional nursing staff and is within a position of being fully staffed. Hoping this will increase stability.

Russ Nelson: New staff, Faro Taug new Emergency management officer. Working with AEMA on risk assessment pilot project. Emergency operations centre was open from April 29th to July, during which twelve (12) hospitals were evacuated. Finally demobilized emergency operations in October. Engagement with Municipalities. Big outcome was needed for situational awareness sharing, as it is difficult to get out there in person and appreciate when Municipalities are able to share information with them and allow them to be part of planning conversation. Want to be involved with re-entry as well. Discussed using zone emergency operations centre. Would like to use their own processes, not burden ESS. Generally, evacuate those who need extra help before the general public.

Discussed hospital and lodge evacuation plans. Lodge is working on their own evacuation plan.

ATCO:

Shelley Abram & Bernadette Gordon: Lost 3500 poles across Alberta. Four (4) ICCs were open for the summer. Had to put a hold on all construction work. Brushing cost \$110 million this year and has been the worst disaster in history for ATCO. Very involved with GPREP, and the outage app was beneficial for residents. Asked to share outage app on social media with residents. Rob Galon asked if power shut offs for fire would be included in app. ATCO keeps track of critical customers.

ATCO was able to participate in GPREP meetings which was helpful. Would be beneficial to have them sit in meetings during emergencies.

11. ROUND TABLE

11. Town of Spirit River
Changes in staff, so will need to look at who needs training.
11. Central Peace Fire
Commented on the great job ATCO has done with brushing.
11. MD of Spirit River
Will update training spreadsheet. Will talk about applying for fire education grant again. Brownlee Building is available for hosting courses.

11. Village of Rycroft
Nothing to report.

11. Birch Hills County
Nothing to report.

11. Saddle Hills County
Nothing to report.

12. NEXT MEETING

March 21, 2024 at Birch Hills County. Supper at 6:00 p.m., Meeting to start at 6:30 p.m.

14. ADJOURNMENT

14.a. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.