

**Town of
High Prairie**

SEVERE WEATHER

MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY

RESPONSE PLAN

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SEVERE WEATHER ADVISORY SYSTEM - ENVIRONMENT CANADA

General

Severe weather watches, severe weather warnings, and actual event messages are issued by Environment Canada, and as a precaution, severe thunderstorm warnings are further disseminated by Alberta Transportation to the municipalities that may be affected.

Environment Canada Telephone: 1-780-493-3143

Environment Canada Toll Free: 1-780-539-6631

The weather office issues, and radio and T.V. repeat weather watches and weather warnings.

Remember:

A “**Weather Watch**” is **advisory** only. Nothing may happen, but a ‘watch’ may develop into a ‘warning’.

A “**Weather Warning**” means that the event is imminent.

The following information can be used to determine actions for municipal preparedness or can be used as information for public distribution.

A.1 Severe Thunderstorm WATCH:

This forecast message will be issued by Environment Canada when meteorological conditions exist for severe weather to develop. Severe Weather Watches will normally be issued in the late morning for broadcast on radio and television noon-hour newscasts. Watches are issued for groups of public forecast regions covering a large part of the Province.

When a Watch is issued, thunderstorms may not necessarily have developed, and the sky may still be clear. Nevertheless, a Watch should be considered in planning activities for the remainder of the day. Keep alert for developing thunderstorms, and stay tuned to the radio if possible. Better still, check if a weather radio service is available in your area, and monitor it for possible updates to the Watch.

A.2 Severe Thunderstorm WARNING:

A Warning message issued when a dangerous severe thunderstorm is occurring or considered imminent.

-Warnings are issued for specific Counties, Municipal Districts, or Special Areas.

-Warnings are updated hourly. Listen to the radio or weather radio for updated information.

-A warning may read: **“destructive winds, very large hail, intense lightning, or flooding downpours have occurred, or are about to occur somewhere in the Warning area. Keep a lookout for thunderstorms and be prepared to take action. Darkening skies along with thunder and lightning will mark the storm’s approach.”**

When a Warning is issued for a specific area, there is a likelihood that a severe weather event will occur somewhere in that area. Not all parts of the area may be affected.

When the Weather Centre has reliable evidence that a tornado is occurring, a Tornado Warning is issued. In spite of its destructive intensity, a tornado is generally a small and short-lived event, which is usually detected by eyewitness reports. With a tornado warning in effect, typically only a single location in an area will suffer damage. The response should be similar to that for a severe thunderstorm warning. Be prepared to move away from the area or to find shelter. Keep a close eye on any approaching thunderstorms.

A.3 Thunderstorm Approaching:

When a thunderstorm approaches, the safest place to be is inside a solid building, especially one with a basement.

If caught outdoors, keep in mind that the biggest killer in thunderstorms is lightning. Be particularly careful with fishing rods and golf clubs, as they may attract a lightning bolt. Stay away from fences, metal structures, and farm equipment. Keep away from hills, ridges, or wide-open areas, and do not seek shelter under a tree. A ditch or gully may be the safest place.

Boating accidents are the second biggest cause of fatalities. Any thunderstorm is capable of producing dangerous winds. Severe thunderstorms often produce extreme winds which could rapidly capsize even large pleasure boats.

A.4 Tornado Watches and Warnings:

The word ‘tornado’ may be used in three different weather announcements.

If there is a severe thunderstorm warning, it may include the phrase **“Remember: some severe thunderstorms can produce tornados.”** This is really the same as a tornado watch. It does not mean that there will be a tornado, it means that a tornado could develop. Stay alert and listen to your radio.

A tornado watch means that all the conditions that make a tornado are present;. It does not mean that a tornado will necessarily occur. It is a “watch” only. Listen to your radio for hourly updates.

A tornado warning means that a tornado has touched down. If the warning is for the area where you live, take precautions immediately and listen to your radio for constant updates.

A.5 Tornado Spotted and Approaching :

Danger at this point can be extreme. If the tornado is directly approaching, immediate response is required. Schools and public facilities should activate their Tornado Action Plans.

If you are in or near a building, seek shelter in the basement or in a small room near the building’s core. Stay away from windows, since flying glass and storm projectiles can be deadly. Leave any building that has large expanses of roof, such as a gymnasium or an arena. Leave a mobile home to seek shelter in a nearby permanent structure.

A.6 When a Severe Tornado Storm Threatens:

During heavy storm activity, have a battery-powered radio available as a good source for warning information or advice.

Check access to the designated shelter area and your “Emergency Kit”; stay away from windows.

Avoid traveling any great distance so that you will not be caught in the open.

If the storm approaches severe proportions, go to your designated shelter area.

If caught outdoors and you cannot reach your designated shelter, lie flat in a ditch, excavation or culvert. If possible, lay flat, holding on to the base of a small tree, brush or shrubbery to avoid being lifted or blown away.

If caught while driving, drive away from the funnel at a right angle (if possible). If you cannot escape the path of the funnel, get out of your vehicle immediately and seek shelter in a ditch or a ravine away from the vehicle, keeping the ditch’s slope between you and the funnel.

If caught away from home in a built up area, seek shelter in a sturdy building and go to an interior hallway or washroom on the lower floor away from flying glass; avoid buildings with large span roofs such as malls or supermarkets, etc.

A.7 Mobile Home Owners - Special Precautions:

Mobile home owners must take special precautions to protect themselves; mobile home residents are the exception to the “stay indoors” rule. Get out of your mobile home immediately and seek shelter in a ditch or a ravine away from the building, keeping the ditch’s slope between you and the funnel.

Severe storms usually travel from a southwest, west, or northwesterly direction; mobile homes facing these directions present a smaller profile to an approaching storm.

Mobile homes are vulnerable to being overturned, lifted then hurtled to the ground. They may be protected somewhat by being anchored to the ground using heavy cable or chain which has been secured to the mainframe and embedded into solid concrete set deeply into the ground; the manufacturer should be consulted about tie down measures which can deal with the equivalent of 18,000 kg of explosive pressure being exerted against an area (wall) of 3 meters by 15 meters. A securely anchored mobile home that has been securely skirted by chain link will offer protection from flying debris only, if no other shelter is available.

A.8 After a Tornado’s Impact:

Listen to your radio for information and follow instructions.

Unless you are requested or qualified to give help, stay away from the stricken area.

Activate your family’s pre-planned rendezvous arrangements.

Avoid using the telephone except for emergencies.

1.0 ACTIVATION OF PLAN AND NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES

1.1 Municipal Officials and Municipal Employees:

1.1.1 Upon being made aware of a *severe weather warning* being issued by Environment Canada that may affect the Town of High Prairie, a Municipal Official or Municipal Employee shall contact the Director of Emergency Management, the Deputy Director or designate and:

1.1.1.1 Shall inform them of the *severe weather warning* being issued and shall provide as much information as possible regarding the warning.

1.1.1.2 In the event that severe weather conditions have caused injury to persons, or have caused property damages, the informant shall relate as much information as they have available on the extent of the injuries/damages.

1.1.1.3 If qualified to do so, the informant shall classify the emergency to be a Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3 Emergency and may recommend the activation of the Municipal Emergency Response Plan.

1.2 Director of Emergency Management, Deputy Director or Designate:

1.2.1 Upon receiving notification as above described, the Director of Emergency Management, Deputy Director or designate:

1.2.1.1 May contact and alert the Disaster Services Committee members of the situation at hand and request their assembly at the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), or to select an alternate location as the EOC.

1.2.1.2 May contact an administrative support person and request that person to notify the appropriate Disaster Services Agency members and Agency advisors to assemble at the designated EOC.

1.2.1.3 May proceed to the EOC and prepare the facility for operations.

1.2.1.4 In the event that a state of local emergency is declared, the Disaster Services Director shall activate the **Severe Weather Response Plan**.

1.2.1.5 Shall notify the Emergency Management District Officer of the emergency and the declaration of the state of local emergency.

1.2.1.6 Shall appoint an Emergency Site Manager. In most cases, the Fire Chief or the Public Works Superintendent shall be appointed as Emergency Site Manager.

- 1.2.1.7 May, in the event that municipal resources are inadequate to facilitate the responses required to deal with the effects of the weather related damages or imminent dangers, recommend to the Disaster Services Committee that additional equipment or resources are employed from the private sector or through the activation of Mutual Aid Agreements.
- 1.2.1.8 May recommend to the Disaster Services Committee that assistance be requested from Provincial or Federal government resources.
- 1.2.1.9 Shall implement the provisions of the Evacuation Plan when an evacuation is deemed necessary.
- 1.2.1.10 Shall maintain an accurate and complete record of all actions taken.
- 1.2.1.11 Shall request a full report from each emergency service provider activated, on the emergency operations/actions taken by those emergency service providers.

1.3 Disaster Services Committee

- 1.3.1 Upon receiving notification of an emergency or emergent emergency situation:
 - 1.3.1.1 Shall gather at the designated EOC. *Note: Because of this type of Emergency, the Director of Emergency Management may appoint an alternate location for the EOC.*
 - 1.3.1.2 A quorum of the Disaster Services Committee, or subsequent to a quorum not being available, two members of the Disaster Services Committee, shall evaluate the information and details regarding the severe weather occurrence and shall determine if a state of local emergency is to be declared. In the absence of a quorum of the Disaster Services Committee, or two members of the Committee, the power to declare a state of local emergency is delegated to the Mayor, or in the absence of the Mayor, to the Deputy Mayor.
 - 1.3.1.3 Shall, in the event that a state of local emergency is declared, insure the declaration identifies the area of the Town of High Prairie in which the emergency exists.
 - 1.3.1.4 Shall cause the declaration of the state of local emergency to be published immediately by way of communication considered effective for the notification of the populace in the emergency area.

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- 1.3.1.5 Shall forward a copy of the declaration to the Minister of Municipal Affairs forthwith.
- 1.3.1.6 Shall utilize the provisions of Bylaw xx-2009, the Municipal Emergency Management Bylaw, to the extent required or deemed necessary to adequately combat the emergency at hand.
- 1.3.1.7 Shall be provided with periodic updates on the emergency by the Director of Emergency Management.
- 1.3.1.8 Shall, by resolution, terminate the declaration of the state of local emergency when satisfied that the state of local emergency no longer exists.
- 1.3.1.9 Shall notify the Minister of Municipal Affairs that the state of local emergency has been lifted or terminated.

2.0 DISASTER AGENCY MEMBERS AND ADVISORS - PROCEDURES

2.1 Emergency Site Manager:

- 2.1.1 Shall establish a command center, request, direct, and co-ordinate municipal personnel and municipal resources to respond to the emergency situation(s) that have resulted from a severe weather occurrence.
- 2.1.2 Shall co-ordinate and assist other emergency response agencies, persons and resources to facilitate orderly emergency management and enhance safety at an emergency site(s).
- 2.1.3 Shall co-ordinate operations with the Director of Emergency Management or the designate and periodically communicate with the Director of Emergency Management to provide updated information on the emergency situation(s).
- 2.1.4 Shall establish a communication system with the other emergency responders at an emergency site(s).
- 2.1.5 Shall keep accurate and detailed records on the emergency which will at minimum include a description of the damages resulting from the severe weather occurrence, a record of the municipal resources and manpower to respond to the emergency, a record of other emergency responders and agencies attending, a record of private enterprise equipment and manpower secured to assist with the emergency, and a record of any mutual aid partners attending.
- 2.1.6 Shall co-ordinate casualty search operations in co-operation with other emergency response agencies.

2.1.7 Shall ensure utility support agencies are contacted, if required.

2.1.8 Shall assist with evacuation procedures if an evacuation is required.

2.1.9 Shall contact a dangerous goods support agency, if required.

2.2 R.C.M.P. and Town of High Prairie Peace Officers:

2.2.1 Shall assist in the establishment of a communications system so that communications can be maintained with the Emergency Response Centre and other emergency responders.

2.2.2 Shall co-ordinate with the Emergency Site Manager to establish and define a working area(s) required to facilitate appropriate emergency response(s).

2.2.3 Shall control the perimeter of the working area(s) to ensure unauthorized persons do not enter the area.

2.2.4 Shall provide crowd and panic control at the emergency site(s) and in the affected area.

2.2.5 Shall establish and control routes for emergency vehicles to egress and regress from the emergency site(s).

2.2.6 Shall establish traffic routes to divert traffic from the emergency site(s), provide traffic control and direction.

2.2.7 Shall establish a mobile public warning system to relate information to people that may be affected or endangered by any hazard created by the emergency.

2.2.8 Shall notify the hospital of casualties and injuries (numbers and type) so the hospital can prepare to receive the casualties.

2.2.9 Shall provide security for the protection of lives, public and private property.

2.2.10 Shall secure the emergency site(s) for future investigation requirements.

2.2.11 Shall assist with the evacuation of buildings and residential areas when an evacuation is authorized by the Director of Emergency Management or his designate.

2.2.12 Shall assist with casualty search operations.

2.3 Town of High Prairie Public Information Officer (PIO):

- 2.3.1 Shall inform the public, as soon as possible, of the emergency or disaster that is imminent and advise the public of appropriate self-help actions, or issue public warning messages as directed by the Director of Emergency Management.
- 2.3.2 Shall prepare news releases in conjunction with the Director of Emergency Management or the designate.
- 2.3.3 Shall consult with the Director of Emergency Management to arrange for media access to the site(s).
- 2.3.4 Shall establish contact with Alberta Transportation - Communications Branch, (through the Disaster Services Branch).
- 2.3.5 Shall arrange for a central media facility, if required.
- 2.3.6 Shall obtain information from all relevant sources and be prepared to provide the media with honest, non-speculative answers related to these basic questions:
 - Who is involved?
 - What happened?
 - Where did it happen?
 - When did it happen?
 - Why did it happen?
 - How is it being dealt with?
 - How much will it cost?

2.4 Town or High Prairie Administrative and Clerical Staff:

- 2.4.1 Shall alert the required Disaster Services Agency and Advisory Members to gather at the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), upon receiving instructions from the Director of Emergency Management or designate.
- 2.4.2 Shall, in conjunction with the Director of Emergency Management, prepare to co-ordinate volunteer services. This shall include registering people who are willing to provide voluntary services, scheduling voluntary services, arranging for food, water and refreshments and providing transportation requirements for the volunteers.
- 2.4.3 Shall provide administrative support to managers or designates of municipal emergency response agencies.
- 2.4.4 Shall purchase and distribute supplies and/or services as required.

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- 2.4.5 Shall maintain a record of all supplies and/or services purchased.
- 2.4.6 Shall, upon being requested by the Director of Emergency Management, arrange security staff for the EOC.
- 2.4.7 Shall attend to public inquiries. The support staff will be briefed on how to communicate information to the public and will be provided with “fact sheets” of information on the municipal response, and telephone contact numbers that have been established to respond to the emergency.
- 2.4.8 Shall maintain a log of all activities.

2.5 Town of High Prairie Public Works Department:

- 2.5.1 Shall provide municipal equipment and personnel and set up a staging area on site, or as required.
- 2.5.2 Shall access equipment, supplies, and technical expertise from outside the municipality.
- 2.5.3 Shall contact utilities to disconnect services that present a hazard if not already done so by the Emergency Site Manager.
- 2.5.4 Shall provide barricades and flashing lights.
- 2.5.5 Shall ensure adequate supplies of water are available, in consultation with the Environmental Officer if required.
- 2.5.6 Shall restore essential services.
- 2.5.7 Shall take such action as is necessary to minimize the effects of the emergency on the municipality.
- 2.5.8 Shall coordinate Public Works response with Director of Emergency Management and Emergency Services on scene.
- 2.5.9 Shall provide for a staging area for Emergency Services arriving at the site(s).

2.6 Utility Companies - Electric Power, Natural Gas, Telephone

- 2.6.1 Upon being notified, shall eliminate the utility related hazards from damaged utility facilities at the scene.

2.6.2 When safe to do so, shall restore utility facilities to buildings and structures.

2.7 Social Services

2.7.1 Alberta Human Resources and Employment shall set up social services and inquiry services in accordance to their Disaster Social Services Plan.

2.7.2 Big Lakes FCS shall co-ordinate with, and assist, Alberta Human Resources and Employment in the provision of social and inquiry services.

2.8 Emergency Medical Services

2.8.1 Shall establish and maintain communication with the local Medical Officer of Health and Health Care Centres.

2.8.2 Shall maintain contact with Emergency Site Manager on scene.

2.8.3 Shall coordinate emergency medical services resources on site.

2.8.4 Shall activate mutual aid emergency medical services resources.

2.8.5 Shall activate medivac resources.

2.8.6 Shall obtain a casualty count and brief the Director of Emergency Management or designate.

2.8.7 Shall assist other Emergency Services, as required.