



First Nation Emergency Response in Manitoba: Roles and Responsibilities

In October 2009, the Government of Canada and the Province of Manitoba signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the improved delivery of emergency management programs in First Nation communities. The MOU describes an agreement in principle to have Manitoba's Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) provide services to First Nation communities within provincial boundaries on behalf of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC).

When flooding, forest fires and other emergencies occur, the proposed agreement will ensure that First Nation communities have access to a level of emergency services comparable to other communities. The implementation of this MOU will result in a closer working relationship between First Nations, neighbouring communities and government agencies, and a broader, more streamlined approach to emergency planning, response and recovery.

First Nations

First Nations are responsible for developing and implementing emergency plans for their communities.

When an emergency occurs or may be imminent within a First Nation, it is the responsibility of the Chief and Council of the First Nation to utilize all available local resources to respond to any situation that results in a present or imminent threat to life, property or the environment in their community. The Chief and Council may declare a State of Emergency through a Band Council Resolution, and notify AANDC and Manitoba EMO if such a declaration is made. When a First Nation declares a State of Emergency, it signals their need for assistance.

Manitoba

Manitoba EMO, within the provincial Department of Infrastructure and Transportation, will work in cooperation with the Manitoba Association of Native Fire Fighters (MANFF) to deliver emergency management programs to Manitoba First Nations. During an emergency, Manitoba EMO will be responsible for coordinating emergency response assistance to First Nations when local resources are overwhelmed.

Emergency response can include providing liaison and advice, and arranging, coordinating or directing personnel, services, equipment or material resources to support a community once their local resources are overwhelmed and they require assistance to deal with the emergency. The costs associated with evacuating a community can include transportation, accommodation and meals, evacuation and reception centre support. The costs incurred under the agreement are reimbursed to Manitoba by the Government of Canada.

Manitoba is responsible for administration of the applicable legislation, and is empowered to make arrangements with the federal government with respect to payment to Manitoba for eligible costs for emergency preparedness as well as provision of personnel, services, and equipment or material resources needed during an emergency.

Beyond providing emergency response assistance, Manitoba EMO will be funded by the Government of Canada to provide emergency preparedness assistance. These activities will include support to First Nations in areas such as emergency planning, training and exercise development.

Government of Canada



AANDC is in regular contact with Manitoba EMO, and will remain engaged with all aspects of emergency management program delivery to ensure the needs of First Nations are coordinated and in conjunction with the broader provincial system for emergency management.

Response to Natural Disaster

AANDC is responsible for making arrangements with Manitoba to ensure provincial government emergency management agencies provide consistent and timely support to First Nation communities when a disaster threatens or has occurred.

AANDC will support the evacuation of the community when there is an imminent threat to the community and there is a consensus of all parties that an evacuation is warranted. This means that an evacuation of the community will occur after an assessment of the situation has been completed and it has been determined that there is a need to evacuate.

During an emergency, AANDC provides advice and support within its mandate and authorities as requested by Manitoba. AANDC also provides liaison staff to Manitoba EMO and MANFF, to be present at either the First Nations declaring an emergency, at evacuee reception centres and/or the provincial Emergency Coordination Centre to provide daily updates to AANDC Manitoba regional officials. After the emergency, the Government of Canada reimburses Manitoba for eligible incremental costs associated with the response. Eligibility of costs is based on the provincial government's Disaster Financial Assistance guidelines. The reimbursement is based on receipt of authorized accounts for emergency response assistance rendered from Manitoba and host communities.

The Government of Canada, via Public Safety Canada, funds the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program through Manitoba EMO. First Nations can access funding assistance for investments in equipment and capital costs related to emergency management.

Response to Public Health Emergencies

Health Canada is responsible for emergency management activities on First Nations where they are related to medical care (such as public health measures and primary medical care). AANDC is responsible for the continuity of community-based critical services during an emergency, and for this reason there is close collaboration between AANDC and Health Canada on emergency planning, response, and recovery issues involving First Nations. This relationship is required to ensure coordinated attention to issues ranging from limited, localized emergencies such as floods and forest fires, to far-reaching public health emergencies such as pandemic influenza. The scale and scope of the emergency will result in the inclusion of other relevant agencies to support community-level needs.

AANDC's governance and decision-making processes would continue to operate along with departmental essential services, such as:

- ◆ Processing transfer payments to First Nations as per grants and contributions authorities; certifying funds; conducting budget transfers; carrying out emergency procurement services; and maintaining contact with communities on funding issues;
- ◆ Ensuring IT support services to staff and required contractors and security services for buildings and staff;
- ◆ Maintaining processing for incoming mail and granting access to documents as required;
- ◆ Providing media, public and internal communications and communications with First Nations; and
- ◆ Implementing AANDC's National Emergency Management Plan as required and providing technical and operational support to First Nations during emergencies.

