



2020 SPRING MELT: FLOOD PREPAREDNESS

A Regional District of East Kootenay Preparedness Guide

This seasonal preparedness bulletin will help provide information on how you can prepare in the event we experience spring flooding this year. New this year we have added some guidelines on sandbagging in a COVID19 pandemic.

There are two unofficial “melt” seasons in the East Kootenay: the low elevation melt and the high elevation melt.

With the warmer temperatures, the snow has been disappearing around our homes and properties. This is the low elevation melt. As temperatures warm up in the early spring our risk of overland flooding increases. Overland flooding occurs because the ground is still frozen and can’t absorb the resulting runoff as the snow starts to melt at lower elevations. This year, the risk of overland flooding is low due to low amounts of snow in the lower elevations.

CURRENT SNOW PACK

In the mountains, snow pack may still be accumulating. When this high elevation snow melts, it is called the spring freshet. In the East Kootenay, freshet can happen from mid-April into June depending on conditions. According to the BC River Forecast Centre, by April 1st, nearly 95% of the annual BC snow pack has typically accumulated. For most areas, the transition from snow accumulation to melt generally occurs in mid-April and therefore the April 1st snow survey is considered to be the key survey of the year for assessing the impact of snow pack on seasonal water supply and flood risk. In the East Kootenay, our melt is often a bit later due to our elevation. **As of April 1st, our snowpack was 113% of normal.** It is important to understand, that the amount of snow pack is not as important as the way it melts. If we have a prolonged cooler spring, the melt would happen over a longer period of time, and there would be less risk of seasonal flooding. If we have a sudden hot spell or prolonged heavy rain, the risk of seasonal flooding would increase (even in areas with little or no snowpack).

The RDEK is proactively preparing for spring freshet. We are monitoring weather forecasts, maintaining communication with other emergency personnel, and are prepared in the event of widespread flooding.

6 Things to Remember IN AN EVACUATION



IMPORTANT NUMBERS

These are the numbers to call to report wide scale events (like forest fires or floods).

These are 24 hour Provincial numbers that alert local emergency officials.

If you see, or are experiencing flooding, please report it.

FLOODING

1-800-663-3456

FOREST OR WILDLAND FIRES

Cellphone: *5555

Toll Free: 1-800-663-5555

OTHER

(spills, airplane crashes, landslides, avalanche)

1-800-663-3456

YOUR ROLE IN FLOODING

In emergency events such as high water or localized flooding, the primary responsibility for protection of property lies with the property owner.

Owners of properties that are historically flood-prone, adjacent to rivers, creeks or streams, or in low-lying areas where water from snow melt can accumulate are encouraged to prepare for the spring melt that is on the way.

Here are a few things you can consider to prepare for possible flooding:

1. CULVERTS AND DITCHES:

- a. Ensure ditches, water courses, and culverts on your property are not obstructed
- b. Culverts adjacent to public roads for driveway access to properties are the responsibility of the property owner to keep clear.
- c. Ditches along public roads & highways are the responsibility of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. If you see an obstruction in a public road ditch, please call your local contractor. Emcon covers from North of the four corners in Radium (1-866-353-3136) and Mainroad East Kootenay Contracting covers the rest of the region (1-800-665-4929).

2. BASEMENT AND CRAWLSPACE PUMPS: If you have a sump pump in your basement or crawlspace, test it to ensure it is working properly

3. DOWNSPOUTS AND GUTTERS: Ensure the water from your roof is being directed away from your home

4. SNOW BANKS: Remove any accumulated snow that may melt and pose a threat

5. SANDBAG & MOVE VALUABLES: put down sandbags and move valuables (like tools, vehicles, etc.) to higher ground before flooding becomes an issue to help protect your home and property.

6. BERMS AND WATER CONTROL STRUCTURES: Inspect berms or water control structures for integrity, erosion, etc..

7. INSURANCE: Review of your homeowner's insurance policy to determine what coverage is included.

8. VALUABLE DOCUMENTS, PHOTOS, ETC.: Ensure important material susceptible to water damage that is stored in a basement or other vulnerable location is raised from the floor or stored in waterproof containers

9. COPY DOCUMENTS: Keep a binder/file of important insurance, medical documents, etc. that can be easily grabbed in the event of an emergency or evacuation.

NEED SANDBAGS?

Empty sandbags are available from the RDEK. To arrange pick up, please call:

- 250-489-2791 or 1-888-478-7335 (from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Friday)
- 250-489-9677 (after-hours only)

In the event of potential wide-scale flooding, the RDEK may establish self-fill sandbag stations in areas with the potential to be impacted.

THE EK EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

If a major emergency (such as a forest fire, flood, hazardous materials spill) occurs, the RDEK's East Kootenay Emergency Management Program (EKEMP) kicks into gear and, in a large-scale event, an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) will be activated.

The most important thing to understand about the Emergency Management Program is that it supports the agencies, local authorities, municipalities and First Nations that are responding to an emergency.

For example, in a forest fire situation, the BC Wildfire Service responds to the fire. The EKEMP provides additional support to the BC Wildfire Service. In addition, we coordinate evacuation alerts, orders or rescinds; provide Emergency Social Services; and, provide information to the public and evacuees.

In the case of flooding, the RDEK has two distinct roles:

- 1. SUPPORT** — our EKEMP activates (if required) to support the responding agencies, local authorities, municipalities and First Nations like it would for any major emergency (such as forest fires as outlined above).
- 2. RESPONSE** — as the local government for the rural areas, the RDEK is also the responding agency that is tasked with dealing with wide-scale flooding in rural areas and has a dedicated Flood Response Unit. In a municipality, the municipality is responsible for the "response" within its boundaries and the EKEMP can be requested to provide the emergency management support function.

When Does the RDEK's Flood Response Unit Respond?

The RDEK's Flood Response Unit responds to flooding in a rural area when a high water or flood situation poses a threat:

- To human life
- To human health
- To human habitation
- Of significant damage to structures

If you see or are experiencing this type of serious event, please call the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre at 1-800-663-3456. The Province immediately contacts the appropriate local authority for assessment and determination of next steps.

Property owners are responsible to prepare for, and respond to, localized flooding on their properties (or in their homes).



EMERGENCY SUPPORT SERVICES

Emergency Support Services (ESS) is a local volunteer based emergency response program, providing basic needs to people affected by an emergency or disaster.

When people are forced from their homes due to an emergency (like flooding) ESS volunteers step in to provide basic needs, such as food, clothing or shelter.

ESS is available for 72 hours immediately following the emergency, allowing affected residents the time to make more long-term arrangements and begin the recovery process.

Depending on the situation/emergency, ESS may also be extended.

For large scale responses, in addition to providing basic needs, ESS may also assist with family reunification, emotional support, and transportation.

The goal of ESS is to help people re-establish themselves as quickly as possible following a disaster.

ESS volunteers provide a critical support service during emergencies and we are so grateful to all those volunteers on our ESS teams around the East Kootenay.

THE STAGES OF EVACUATION

As the authority to order an evacuation can rest with different levels of government (local, provincial, or federal), a three stage evacuation process has been developed and accepted by all levels of government. The process includes:

1 STAGE 1 - Evacuation Alert

Residents are advised of the potential need for evacuation. The alert highlights the nature of the danger and that evacuation may be required at any time. Information will be provided at that time on where to go if the evacuation is ordered. Residents should prepare to evacuate and gather personal supplies necessary for several days.

2 STAGE 2 - Evacuation Order

All persons in the affected area are ordered to leave the area and are provided again with the information required. Once evacuated you are not permitted to return until the order has been rescinded. **If an evacuation order is issued, please get out.**

3 STAGE 3 - Evacuation Rescind

All persons in the affected area are advised that the emergency is under control and the area has been declared habitable and the evacuation order has been rescinded.

In the event of imminent danger to property or life, the emergency responders may go straight to an "Evacuation Order" without an alert. This is called a "Tactical Evacuation".

Once you are evacuated from your property you will not be able to re-enter until the evacuation order is rescinded. Security will be provided to the evacuation area to ensure no one re-enters until the order is rescinded.

If you plan on moving RV trailers or boats, the **Alert Stage** is the time to do that. Once an "Evacuation Order" has been issued there is **no time** to allow that to happen.



JOIN OUR ESS TEAM

If you care about people, have a desire to help others, and are good in a team environment, please consider joining one of our ESS teams.

We have ESS teams in all three of our subregions and need volunteers. Training is provided and being an ESS volunteer gives you a chance to give back to your community when they need it most. To learn more call Emergency Program Coordinator Anita Charest at the RDEK or email acharest@rdek.bc.ca.

4 WAYS TO GET EMERGENCY INFO

1. LOCAL MEDIA

2. RDEK FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/eastkootenay

3. RDEK EMAIL GROUP – to join, visit:

http://www.rdek.bc.ca/about/email_group_sign_up/

4. RDEK WEBSITE: www.rdek.bc.ca

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

During a flood is not the time to get prepared.

Visit www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC for guides and plans to help you:

- Put together an emergency kit
- Develop a household emergency plan
- Connect with your neighbours



SANDBAGGING BASICS: SOME HELPFUL TIPS

Here are some basic sandbagging tips from Emergency Management BC:

- Construct the sandbag dike on high ground, close to your home or building. Fewer bags will be needed, and the sandbag dike will be less exposed.
- To be effective, a dike must be three times as wide at its base as it is high.
- Sandbags should be turned right side out and filled half full. They need not be tied shut, just laid overlapping each other. Lap the unfilled portion under the next sandbag.
- The open ends of the sandbags should be facing away from the water or uphill so that the moving water will not remove the sand from the bags as readily.
- As individual bags are put in place, press firmly in place.
- Each successive layer should be set back one-half sandbag width on both sides in each additional layer so a completed dike has a triangular cross-section.

GENERAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADVICE

COVID-19 & SANDBAGGING

Sandbagging while following provincial health guidelines that restrict large gatherings may involve wearing protective masks, eye protection, and gloves to provide the best protection for residents. The EKEMP has implemented the following protocols to appropriately sandbag during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To ensure physical distancing, the EKEMP is advising residents to fill one sand bag at a time without a second person holding the bag upright to align with the physical distancing order. If the second person is a family member residing in the same residence then social distancing is not a concern. The EKEMP understands the challenges of physical distancing while sandbagging.

- Use gloves to protect hands from chemically-treated sandbags and contaminants in sand and floodwater.
- Avoid touching your eyes and mouth at all times.
- Wash your hands and face as often as possible.
- Use safety glasses and face masks when filling up sandbags.
- Wear work boots (waterproofed if working in floodwater).
- Use waterproof gear if working in floodwater or rain.
- Use protective clothing if exposed to polluted floodwater.
- Use a personal floatation device when working near floodwater.

Come prepared to take precautionary measures to minimize the risk of exposure and spread of COVID-19.

EKEMP SANDBAG STATIONS & COVID-19

The EKEMP will as needed have designated Sandbag Stations for the public to fill sandbags to protect their property during spring freshet. EKEMP Sandbag Stations will follow guidelines set by the Ministry of Health regarding physical distancing.

The EKEMP has developed a process where individuals can fill sandbags in a public environment while following Ministry of Health guidance.

- Proper personal protection equipment (PPE) for COVID-19 is advised (gloves, face mask, eye protection).
- Avoid crowding at sandbag locations, line up 2 metres apart, and ensure vehicles are parked at designated parking areas to minimize overcrowding within the Sandbag Station.
- Sand piles will be placed six metres apart to maintain physical distancing for sandbagging at EKEMP Sandbag Stations.
- Bring your own equipment and restrict sharing between persons – the EKEMP is not able to provide a mechanism to clean personal equipment.

Please ensure you are following physical distancing when filling sandbags.

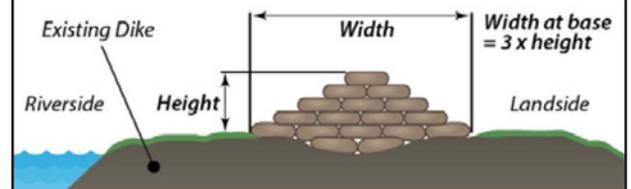
For current information regarding COVID-19, please visit www.covid-19.bccdc.ca

Building a sandbag dike

It takes two people about one hour to fill and place 100 sandbags, giving you a 1-x-20-foot wall. Make sure you have enough sand, burlap or plastic bags, shovels and time to properly prepare. Contact your local government for information on obtaining sandbags.

BAGS REQUIRED PER 100 LINEAR FEET OF DIKE

Height above dike	Bags required
1/3 metre	600
2/3 metre	2,000
1 metre	3,400



Wash and/or sanitize your hands



Cough/sneeze into your elbow, avoid touching your face



Maintain Physical distance (2m or 6 ft)



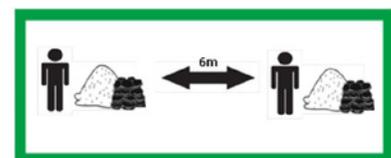
Use sanitizing wipes or gloves to sanitize equipment



Avoid crowds



Avoid contact with common surfaces



Sand will be placed 6m apart to allow for physical distancing