2026 SPRING FRESHET

A Regional District of East Kootenay Flooding Preparedness Guide

With warmer temperatures in early spring, the snow begins to disappear around our homes and properties. This is the **low elevation melt** and sometimes can lead to overland flooding when the ground is still frozen and can't absorb the resulting runoff early in the spring.

In the mountains, snow pack can still accumulate well into spring. **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, as of April 1, 2026, the provincial mountain snow pack is near normal at 92% of normal and higher than last year's (2025) average of 79%.

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 monitoring conditions and we are prepared to respond in the event flooding occurs. This preparedness guide will help you prepare for freshet, particularly if you live near a waterway or in low-lying or flood-prone areas.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

These 24 hour numbers are the fastest way to alert local emergency officials.

FLOODING
250-489-9677

FOREST OR WILDLAND FIRES
Cellphone: *5555
Toll Free: 1-800-663-5555

OTHER (spills, landslides, avalanche)
250-489-9677

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

NEED SANDBAGS?

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

- **250-489-9677**

The RDEK may establish self-fill sandbag stations in areas with the potential to be impacted.

BE SAFE NEAR WATERWAYS

With freshet, water levels in area rivers and streams will rise and conditions can sometimes change rapidly or unpredictably. Residents are encouraged to remain aware of current and forecast conditions and use extra caution around creek and river banks in the weeks ahead.

Waterfront property owners are encouraged to move any equipment away from the water.

Whether you are walking on mountain trails next to small creeks or along the river bank, residents should take increased safety precautions during freshet and stay well back as banks may be unstable and more prone to sudden collapse and erosion. Keep children and pets away from banks of fast flowing streams and flooded areas or bridges.

YOUR ROLE IN 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 that can be impacted by elevated river and stream levels are encouraged to prepare for higher water levels as spring freshet is underway.

Here are a few things to consider as part of your personal preparedness:

1. **CULVERTS AND DITCHES:**
   a. Ensure ditches, water courses, and culverts on your property are not obstructed and flowing freely.
   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 roundabout in Radium (250-837-3136, ext. 200) 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. **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.
5. **BERMS AND WATER CONTROL STRUCTURES:** Inspect berms or water control structures for integrity, erosion, etc.
6. **INSURANCE:** Review of your homeowner's insurance policy to determine what coverage is included.
7. **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.
8. **COPY DOCUMENTS:** Keep a binder/file of important insurance, medical documents, etc. that can be easily grabbed in the event of an emergency.

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, a Regional Emergency Operations Centre (REOC) will be activated.

The EKEMP coordinates 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** — 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).
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**
- **To critical infrastructure**

If you see or are experiencing this type of serious event, please call the 24-hour Emergency Line at **250-489-9677.**

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

4 WAYS TO GET EMERGENCY INFO

1. **LOCAL MEDIA**
2. **RDEK FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/eastkootenay**
3. **RDEK EMAIL GROUPS – to join, visit: https://www.rdek.bc.ca/about/email_group_sign_up/**
4. **RDEK WEBSITE: www.rdek.bc.ca**

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

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.**

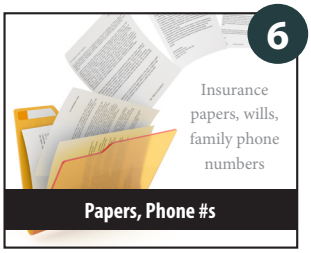
3 STAGE 3 - Evacuation Rescind

All persons in the affected area are advised that the emergency is under control, the evacuation order has been rescinded and it is safe to re-enter.

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.

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

6 Things to Remember *IN AN EVACUATION*



EMERGENCY SUPPORT

Emergency Support Services (ESS) provides basic support to people affected by an emergency or disaster, and is delivered by local ESS volunteer teams.

When people are forced from their homes due to an emergency our ESS volunteers step in to provide basic needs, such as food, clothing or shelter. ESS is available for up to 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 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.

DID YOU KNOW?

It is now possible to pre-register to receive financial support by e-transfer so when you need it and are eligible to receive it, you can get it quickly and easily.

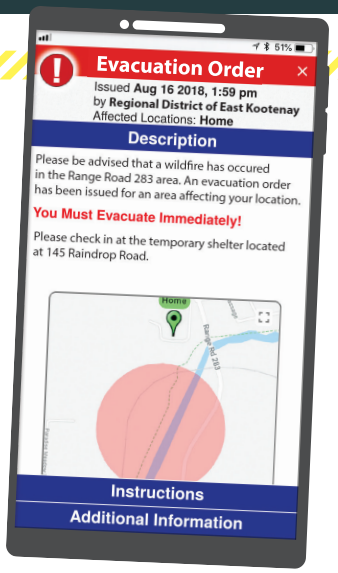
To pre-register for Evacuee Registration & Assistance visit: ess.gov.bc.ca

JOIN OUR ESS TEAM

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

We are always looking to add keen individuals to our ESS team rosters. Training is provided and being part of our Red Cross ESS teams gives you a chance to give back to your community when they need it most. To learn more contact Simran Sandhu at 250-489-6908, or email ssandhu@rdek.bc.ca.

REGIONAL EVACUATION NOTIFICATION SYSTEM (ENS)



The Regional Evacuation Notification System (ENS), which is powered by Voyent Alert! to keep you informed in case of evacuation orders or alerts affecting your property or properties during critical events such as wildfires, floods or hazardous materials incidents.

The service is free and it is for EVERYONE in the East Kootenay - including ALL municipalities, rural areas and First Nations. Visitors of the region can also sign up to be alerted in case of an emergency.

If you have not yet signed up, please do so today. This is one of the most effective tools in our toolbox to notify people of evacuation alerts or orders when every second counts.

some important tips:

THIS IS NOT THE PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL ALERT READY SYSTEM

Many people think they are part of the Regional ENS when they receive a notification like an Amber Alert or test alert on their cellphones via the Provincial/National Alert Ready system. **These are two totally separate systems**. Each has an important role and unique advantages, but we can't stress enough the importance of people registering for the Regional ENS.

IS YOUR PIN IN THE CORRECT LOCATION?

We urge anyone who has signed up previously for the service to login to the system and ensure they have properly pinned their property address or addresses. We have come across many residents who have signed up, only to discover later that they have not placed their pins in the right spot. Those who would like to ensure that they have correctly located their property can do so through the website, app, or by calling the RDEK for help. For tips on how to check, visit www.rdek.bc.ca

DO YOU WANT TO HEAR THE NOTIFICATION EVEN IF YOUR PHONE IS ON DND OR SILENT MODE?

If you are using the Voyent Alert app, it will make a loud sound when an alert is delivered.
For those getting phone calls or text messages, if your phone is on silent mode or Do Not Disturb, the alert will come through like any other text or phone call (either with no notification or a vibration depending how you have your device set up). However, you can set up your device to ensure you hear the alert even if you are on silent mode/DND.

For text messages / SMS notifications - they will come from the number 25378.

1. Create 25378 as a contact in your phone called Voyent Alert (or a name of your choosing)
   - For iPhone users, go into that contact, and choose EMERGENCY BYPASS under your ringtone settings
   - For Android users, you should be able to add the contact to your "Allowed during Do Not Disturb" section
   - For other devices, research the steps to allow for notification during silent mode

For phone call notifications - they will come from the number 250-426-2188 which is the Regional Emergency Information Line.

1. Create 250-426-2188 as a contact in your phone called Emergency Info (or a name of your choosing)
   - For iPhone users, go into that contact, and choose EMERGENCY BYPASS under your ringtone settings
   - For Android users, you should be able to add the contact to your "Allowed during Do Not Disturb" section
   - For other devices, research the steps to allow for notification during silent mode

how to register:

SMS/TEXT OR VOICE DIAL USERS

- **Register online at: https://ca.voyent-alert.com/vras/register.html**
- Choose "My Locations" to pin your locations to receive voice or text based alerts.

MOBILE APP USERS

- Download and install the Voyent Alert! app from the Apple App or Google Play stores.

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

DO YOU NEED HELP SIGNING UP?

If you would like help with signing up, please call the RDEK Cranbrook office at (250) 489-2791 or 1-888-478-7335 and we can do it for you..

Remember to add at least one location when you register

Regional District of East Kootenay

1-888-478-7335 | www.rdek.bc.ca