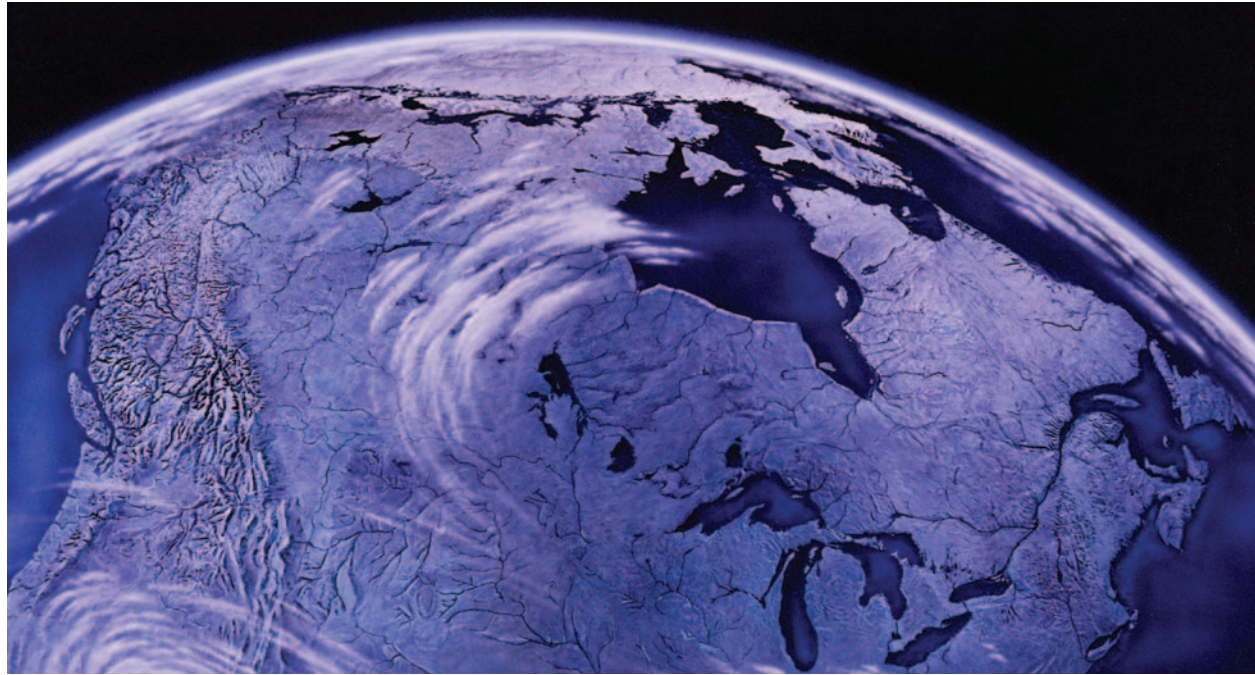

An Emergency Management Framework for Canada



Ministers Responsible for Emergency Management

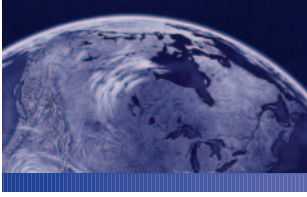


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PREAMBLE

The federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) governments joined efforts to produce this document towards the establishment of a common framework for the various FPT emergency management initiatives. This framework aims to enable consolidation of FPT collaborative work and ensure more coherent, complementary actions among the different FPT governmental initiatives.

This framework gives effect to the January 2005 decision taken by the FPT Ministers responsible for emergency management to "... work together to improve and enhance the emergency response framework in order to harmonize the federal system so that it complements each provincial and territorial system...".

This framework also gives effect to a decision taken at the July 2004 Council of the Federation meeting, where Premiers agreed to "... direct their Ministers to work with the federal government to develop a coordinated strategy for emergency response and readiness for Canada, respecting provincial and territorial laws and plans already in place ...".

Each FPT government has a responsibility for emergency management and public safety in Canada. This document shall be interpreted in full respect of each government's jurisdiction and nothing in this document shall be construed to derogate from respective governments' jurisdiction.

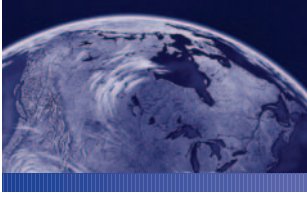


INTRODUCTION

In Canada, emergency management adopts an all-hazards approach that addresses both natural and human-induced hazards and disasters. These are increasing in both number and frequency across the world, resulting in ever growing human suffering and economic cost. Canada is not immune to these events. Natural and human-induced hazards and disasters have become more prevalent in urbanized societies and terrorist attacks on western targets are likely to persist. These events can have profoundly negative effects on Canadians.

Most emergencies in Canada are local in nature and are managed by the municipalities or at the provincial or territorial level. Moreover, accumulating risks associated with factors such as increased urbanization, critical infrastructure dependencies and interdependencies, terrorism, climate variability and change, animal and human health diseases and the heightened movement of people and goods around the world have increased the potential for various types of catastrophes. Such events could transcend geographic boundaries to challenge FPT emergency management, including response.

The fundamental concepts and principles outlined in this framework flow from emergency management activities and measures undertaken in Canada. This point of reference supports legal and policy frameworks, programs, activities, standards and other measures in order to enable and inspire all emergency management partners in Canada to work in better collaboration to keep Canadians safe. This framework is subject to revision based on a dynamic environment. Every five years, FPT governments will review the framework together to ensure that it remains accurate and relevant as emergency management evolves in every jurisdiction in Canada.



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMPONENTS

The ultimate purpose of emergency management is to save lives, preserve the environment and protect property and the economy. The protection of life is of paramount importance. In the broadest sense, emergency management raises the understanding of risks and contributes to a safer, prosperous, sustainable, disaster resistant and resilient society in Canada. Emergency management is comprised of four interdependent risk-based functions as follows:

Prevention and Mitigation – to eliminate or reduce the impacts and risks of hazards through pro-active measures taken before an emergency or disaster occurs, for example land-use management, public education and protective structures such as flood dykes. Prevention and mitigation may be considered independently or one may include the other.

Preparedness – to be ready to respond to a disaster and manage its consequences through measures taken prior to an event, for example emergency response plans, mutual assistance agreements, resource inventories and training, equipment and exercise programs.

Response – to act during or immediately after a disaster to manage its consequences through, for example, emergency public communication, search and rescue, emergency medical assistance and evacuation to minimize suffering and losses associated with disasters.

Recovery – to repair or restore conditions to an acceptable level through measures taken after a disaster, for example return of evacuees, trauma counseling, reconstruction, economic impact studies and financial assistance. There is a strong relationship between long-term recovery and prevention and mitigation of future disasters.



These four interdependent functions may be undertaken sequentially or concurrently, but they are not independent of each other. Emergency management in provincial, territorial and federal governments adopts a comprehensive all-hazards approach to coordinate and integrate prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery functions to maximize the safety of Canadians. Ensuring a strong and seamless relationship across these functions and with appropriate emergency management partners is critical to effective emergency management.

Traditionally, emergency management in Canada has focused on preparedness and response. The changing risk environment now demands that emergency management also deal with specific risks, hazards and vulnerabilities through prevention and mitigation measures in advance of emergencies and disasters. Greater attention or investment in prevention and mitigation can help prevent disasters or significantly reduce the social, economic and environmental costs and damages when events occur.



PRINCIPLES

The principles described here are at the heart of an emergency management framework for Canada. They reflect the essence of emergency management in Canada and they frame the key underlying beliefs and goals of emergency management. These principles are to be considered as a whole to facilitate the attainment of their intended purpose. They aim to support the design, implementation and ongoing improvement of frameworks, programs, procedures, guidelines and activities that taken together comprise the emergency management systems of Canada.

Responsibility

Emergency management roles and activities are carried out in a responsible manner at all levels of society in Canada. Legal and policy frameworks and other arrangements establish guidelines and standards to ensure that due diligence is exercised and accountability is respected in the conduct of emergency management activities. Emergency management responsibilities in Canada are shared by FPT governments and their partners, including individual citizens who have a responsibility to be prepared for disasters. Provincial and territorial governments have responsibility for emergency management within their respective jurisdictions. The federal government exercises leadership at the national level relating to emergency management responsibilities in its exclusive fields of jurisdictions and on lands and properties under federal responsibility.

In an emergency, the first response is almost always by the municipalities or at the provincial or territorial level because disasters occur most often locally. Should a provincial or territorial government require resources beyond their own in an emergency or disaster response, the federal government responds rapidly to any request for assistance by a provincial or territorial government.

Comprehensive

FPT governments have respectively adopted a comprehensive approach to emergency management. The approach is proactive and integrates risk-based measures, all-hazards, partners from all parts of society and coordinates and balances efforts across the prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery functions.



Partnerships

All Canadians are involved in emergency management. Individual citizens, communities, municipalities, and federal, provincial, territorial governments, First Nations, emergency first responders, the private sector (both business and industry), volunteer and non-government organizations, academia, as well as international allies may be involved in emergency management. Good partnerships based on effective collaboration, coordination and communication are a key component of FPT emergency management systems.

Coherency of Action

Emergency management requires collaboration, coordination and integration to facilitate complementary and coherent action by all partners to ensure the most effective use of emergency management resources and execution of activities. Complementary emergency management systems at all levels are to provide for concerted efforts to facilitate timely and effective prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery measures to deal with disasters. Coherency of action relies on the existence of clear and appropriate roles, responsibilities, authorities and capacities of emergency management partners. Collaborative action based on widely shared expectations, understanding and support for these factors are key to coherency of action.

Risk-Based

A risk-based approach informs the interdependent functions of emergency management in Canada. This approach emphasizes the importance of assessing vulnerability to all hazards at the outset to determine the optimal balance and integration of functions to address vulnerabilities and risks. The presence of a hazard or a threat that is related to a vulnerability constitutes a risk. Risk management practices facilitate improved decision-making by clarifying the dimensions of risk, including its causes, likelihood of occurrence and possible severity of consequences. Placing greater emphasis on risk reduction measures is a sustainable way to address the trend of rising social-economic costs of disasters that has occurred under approaches focused heavily on preparedness and response.



Emphasis on ‘up-stream’ prevention and mitigation activities reduces susceptibility to hazards and increases resiliency. This focus is critical because although many hazards cannot be prevented, disasters may be prevented. A systematic assessment of hazards, threats, risks and vulnerabilities relating to people in a geographic area or an organization by appropriate authorities should be carried out before appropriate emergency management measures may be developed. Inadequate management of risks can produce extreme adverse consequences for society, communities, organizations or individuals. Recognized, flexible and effective risk-based approaches allow emergency management activities, programs and systems to be tailored to address particular environments and to accept that living with certain risks may be both prudent and safe.

All-Hazards

Emergency management adopts an all-hazards approach in every jurisdiction in Canada by addressing vulnerabilities exposed by both natural and human-induced hazards and disasters. Hazards are sources of potential harm or loss. Emergencies and disasters result when a hazard interacts with a vulnerability to produce serious and adverse consequences that may, for an undetermined period of time, exceed the ability to cope.

Natural hazards and disasters that are relevant to emergency management include extreme natural events such as floods, hurricanes, storm surges, tsunamis, avalanches, landslides, tornadoes, wild-land urban-interface forest fires and earthquakes. Human-induced disasters that concern emergency management include intentional events that encompass part of the spectrum of human conflict, such as terrorist or cyber attacks. They also include electrical power outages or other disruptions to a critical infrastructure sector (for example, finance, water supply and telecommunications) that result from a human or technological accident or failure. In addition, biological hazards, for example animal or human health diseases that risk causing a pandemic influenza, concern emergency management in Canada. Each hazard should be identified and assessed by appropriate authorities in order to prioritize hazards against potential vulnerabilities in society. By assessing the risks associated with all hazards in an integrated way, efforts may be broadly effective in reducing the vulnerability of people, property, the environment and the economy.



Resilience

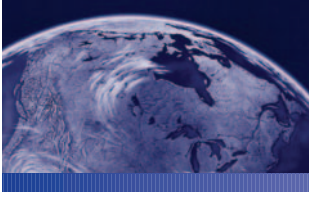
Resilience is the capacity of a system, community or society to adapt to disturbances resulting from hazards by persevering, recuperating or changing to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning. Emergency management aims to strengthen the resiliency of citizens, responders, organizations, communities, governments, systems and society overall to keep hazards from becoming disasters. Resilience minimizes vulnerability or susceptibility to damage from hazards by creating or strengthening social and physical capacity in the human and built-environment to cope with, adapt to, respond to, and recover and learn from disasters.

Clear Communications

FPT governments aim to be as open as possible about the work each of these does in emergency management. Clear communications by appropriate authorities are a critical and continuous process before, during and after an emergency. Prior to an emergency, communication objectives focus on public education concerning emergency management to enhance awareness of hazards, risks and vulnerabilities; strengthen prevention, mitigation and preparedness measures; and provide information on all aspects of emergency management. Public alerting communicates warning messages that a disaster is imminent. Communications during and directly after a disaster explains and guides immediate response actions to minimize impacts and protect safety. These communications are instructive on the requirements for short, medium and long-term recovery.

Continuous Improvement

Lessons learned and knowledge generated from evidence-based and qualitative information is used to develop improved practices, which are shared widely. After emergencies or disasters occur, a systematic approach is used to learn lessons from the experience, increase effectiveness and improve emergency management practices and processes. Recovery from a disaster may be completed by documenting and internalizing lessons learned. Continuous improvement, including incremental and transformational change, is undertaken systemically as an integral part of emergency management functions and practices at all levels, as appropriate, to minimize the recurrence of problems.



CONCLUSION

An emergency management framework for Canada is established through FPT governments' emergency management systems. The framework aims to encourage this important contribution of FPT governments in partnership with others towards the effective functioning of an emergency management framework for Canada enhancing the public safety of Canadians.



GLOSSARY

This glossary is provided for reference purposes and is not intended to modify existing definitions in various federal, provincial and territorial laws in effect.

Critical infrastructure – essential underlying systems and facilities upon which our standard of life relies.

Disaster – essentially a social phenomenon that results when a hazard intersects with a vulnerable community in a way that exceeds or overwhelms the community’s ability to cope and may cause serious harm to the safety, health, welfare, property or environment of people; may be triggered by a naturally occurring phenomenon which has its origins within the geophysical or biological environment or by human action or error, whether malicious or unintentional, including technological failures, accidents and terrorist acts.

Emergency – a present or imminent event that requires prompt coordination of actions concerning persons or property to protect the health, safety or welfare of people, or to limit damage to property or the environment.

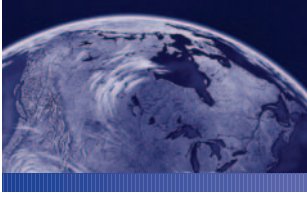
Emergency Management – the management of emergencies concerning all-hazards, including all activities and risk management measures related to prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

Hazard – a potentially damaging physical event, phenomenon or human activity that may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation.

Mitigation – sustained actions taken to eliminate or reduce risks and impacts posed by hazards well before an emergency or disaster occurs; mitigation activities may be included as part of prevention.

Mutual Assistance Agreement – a pre-arranged agreement developed between two or more entities to render assistance to the parties of the agreement.

Partner – any individual, group, or organization that might be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by an emergency.



Prevention – actions taken to avoid the occurrence of negative consequences associated with a given threat; prevention activities may be included as part of mitigation.

Resilience – the capacity of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure.

Resistance – the ability to resist or withstand impacts so that inevitable damage from an extreme event does not reach ‘disastrous’ proportions.

Risk – the combination of the likelihood and the consequence of a specified hazard being realized; refers to the vulnerability, proximity or exposure to hazards, which affects the likelihood of adverse impact.

Risk-Based – the concept that sound emergency management decision-making will be based on an understanding and evaluation of hazards, risks and vulnerabilities.

Risk Management – the use of policies, practices and resources to analyze, assess and control risks to health, safety, environment and the economy.

Sustainable – a sustainable approach is one that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Threat – the presence of a hazard and an exposure pathway; threats may be natural or human-induced, either accidental or intentional.

Vulnerability – the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards. It is a measure of how well prepared and equipped a community is to minimize the impact of or cope with hazards.

Emergency management is a shared responsibility that builds a sustainable, prosperous and disaster-resilient society.

An Emergency Management Framework for Canada guides and strengthens the way governments work together to protect the safety and security of all Canadians.