

**Minutes**  
**M.D. of Ranchland No. 66**  
**Chimney Rock Wildfire**  
**CWF-258**  
**Operational Debrief**  
  
**November 28, 2017**  
**1:30 p.m.**

Acronyms

ECC – Emergency Coordination Centre  
DEM – Director of Emergency Management  
DDEM – Deputy DEM  
ICS – Incident Command System  
PPE – Personal Protection Equipment  
AEMA – Alberta Emergency Management Agency

The Director of Emergency Management opened the meeting at 1:32 p.m. and round table introductions were made. A PowerPoint presentation of “**What Went Well**” and “**Where Can We Improve**” was reviewed.

NOTES FROM DISCUSSION OF “WHERE CAN WE IMPROVE”

**Challenge:** MD’s ECC was understaffed. It was noted that there were too many roles to fill for the number of municipal staff that work in the MD.

**Suggested Action Item:** Secure readily available qualified staff for the ECC from neighboring municipalities thru mutual aid agreements.

**Challenge:** MD’s ECC staff and elected officials need to better understand their roles & responsibilities.

**Suggested Action Item:** Training – specifically ECC-2 training for municipal staff; DEM training for DEM and DDEMs; a refresher course for municipal elected officials; and all staff and council trained to an ICS 200 level.

**Challenge:** Note taking – decisions need to be better documented.

**Suggested Action Item:** Awareness by ECC staff to recognize and record pertinent information and decisions made. DEM position may require a scribe, and depending on the scale of the event so may the operations section.

**Challenge:** No one in command knew that MD employees were trained/equipped to fight fire. They were not operating under the command structure.

**Suggested Action Item:** Better communication with mutual aid partners as to MD staff qualifications; need for interagency training. MD staff also need proper firefighting PPE if they are going to be responding to fires i.e. fire-retardant clothing & helmets. Staff also needs to follow the command structure and to report in to the Incident Commander or a staging area to be dispatched. There needs to be an accounting for persons going in to fight the fire, and recognition that untrained persons cannot be sent in. A manifest of names to the RCMP as to who can be let in would help.

**Challenge:** MD's ECC staff did not have identification.

**Suggested Action Item:** At a minimum name tags are needed with name and position held noted; or perhaps vests for identification (color coded to position i.e. green vest for Director and Deputy Director; red for command staff etc.). It was noted by the AEMA Field Officer that there is funding available for these types of purchases through the Emergency Management Preparedness Program (EMPP).

**Challenge:** The M.D.'s office building did not function well as an ECC. Too exposed to the general public.

**Suggested Action Item:** Thought to be given as to how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the MD's ECC within the existing floor plan of the building. Renovations to certain offices may be required.

**Challenge:** ECC layout and supplies.

**Suggested Action Item:** Create more visual displays of information and update them when needed. Practice thru ECC-2 training. Ensure ECC staff is familiar with the Municipal Emergency Plan and will turn to it more readily to use it.

**Challenge:** Mapping for Emergency Personnel – existing MD ownership maps do not show private laneways or landmarks.

**Suggested Action Item:** Specialized map developed for emergency personnel – not for public distribution. M.D. of Willow Creek would like an electronic version of any maps we have, and any maps created for emergency purposes. Ag & Forestry would like PDF & geo-referenced maps – Avenza. Maps are important for new or additional resources coming in. Local knowledge of the area is always helpful i.e. who is living and who has livestock where; who may be hunting/recreating where; who is home or not home etc. Pre-attack plans/pre-suppression plans – mapping system where houses, laneways etc. are identified – can be part of the FireSmart process where a risk assessment is completed on residential properties. It was suggested that a cross-reference to the municipal blue sign could be done; along with a reference to dugouts, any firefighting equipment located on the property etc. Some maps need to be laminated so they may be drawn on.

**Challenge:** Public wants better communication about events happening.

**Suggested Action Item:** MD staff to research telephone/email communication programs that will transmit emergency messages to area landowners quicker. Safe Communities Alert Network (SCAN) was noted as a potential tool, along with the MD developing a Facebook page – look at having the FB page for information only.

**Challenge:** Re-entry Permits beyond first day.

**Suggested Action Item:** Communicate to those applying for re-entry permits that new permits will be required each day from the municipal office for re-entry.

**Challenge:** Evacuating a population of people who do not want to be evacuated regardless of risk to everyone involved. Ensuring the safety of residents/helpers would allow firefighters to focus on property structures sooner rather than focusing on life safety of residents/helpers.

**Suggested Action Item:** Better communication with mutual aid partners as to local/rancher training qualifications and resources. Locals/ranchers must be aware of and follow the command structure to ensure everyone's safety and to enable effective operations. The ECC needs to be advised as to which residents are staying in despite the mandatory evacuation order. An accountability program needs to be in place for people accessing an area after the evacuation order has been executed. A public safety information session may be needed –

for the public to trust there is a crew coming to work on the fire. Suggestion was made to invite Ag & Forestry and Willow Creek Emergency Services to do an information session during Emergency Preparedness Week. There is rancher interest in a Wildfire Orientation Course. The RCMP would have liked a Fish & Wildlife officer on scene as it was the opening day of hunting season.

It was noted that daily municipal business needs to be shut down during an emergency event – priority is given to keeping the public informed of what is happening.

Additional Comments: Was the electronic message board useful in supplementing the barricades on Chimney Rock Road? Was it a worthwhile item to put in place? None of the representatives from Ag & Forestry at the debrief could answer this question, as neither of them were actively working the fire at that time.

It was noted that some education needs to happen regarding public perception of staging areas. The public also needs to understand that firefighters can only do, what they can do safely at the time.