



Roles in a wildfire

BC Wildfire

- BC Wildfire leads and directs response in the role as the incident command
- Requests the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) to activate and support the event
- Commands any required resources such as staff, equipment and vehicles including the regional fireboat and the RDCO fire departments and equipment
- Directs wildfire suppression activities

Regional Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)

- Supports the incident command (BC Wildfire)
- Procures resources
- Helps to coordinate response activities
- Evacuates residents at the request of incident command
- Distributed information on evacuation orders and alerts

Fire Departments

- Follows the direction of BC Wildfire and the EOC

White Rock Lake Wildfire

RDCO Community Information

Introduction

We recognize the fire significantly impacted people of the North Westside including loss of homes and structures on 75 properties - 31 of these within the Killiney Beach water system area. It is a difficult time for everyone.

There have been questions in the community about the RDCO role and response during the White Rock Lake wildfire. The information below is intended to clarify some information and answer questions.

The RDCO has been working with the community on recovery to ensure that community members have the supports they need to manage clean up, demolition and to start rebuilding.

The Province and the RDCO are also completing risk and foreshore assessments in the area to ensure future safety.

Review

The White Rock Lake wildfire activity was extremely aggressive and highly unpredictable. It

devasted several communities and burned over 83,000 hectares.

After every natural disaster, it is imperative to look back on emergency response to determine how improvements can be made going forward.

We expect that BC Wildfire, the incident command on this event, will lead a review on the wildfire response. The RDCO is also reviewing responses by both the Emergency Operations Centre and the Emergency Support Services program.

What should be recognized now is that attributing homes lost in our community to any one action, activity or person is misguided.

BC Wildfire was in command of the response, supported by the Regional Emergency Operations Centre, as well as dozens of structural fire departments from across BC and Canada.

RDCO staff and particularly RDCO fire departments in the North Westside, contributed tirelessly and heroically as part of a much larger team to save homes in the area.

Community Questions

BC Wildfire as Incident Command

Q: How were firefighting tactics determined?

A: From the onset, BC Wildfire took command and directed firefighting tactics. RDCO Fire Services and departments supported BC Wildfire.

BC Wildfire developed a structural protection plan, evaluating which areas within the community were likely defensible and some which due to egress options, density and vegetation (fuel) were deemed undefensible. This triage set the focus for fire fighting activities.

Part of this planning was conducted by BC Wildfire's Water Division which specifically looked at water capacity and options.

Decisions made by BC Wildfire:

- Where and how many provincial structure protection units (sprinklers also known as SPUs) were used
- Primary and secondary water sources for firefighting based on capacity testing
- Generator requirement and use
- Regional fireboat use

Water sources for firefighting activity, Killiney Beach water system, generators and their impact

Q: What were the main sources of water for fire fighting activity?

A: It was determined in advance by BC Wildfire that the Killiney Beach water system could only support a rotational use of provincial structural protection units (sprinklers). The main sources of active fire suppression water were 40,000 gallon and 20,000 gallon tanks placed in the community ahead of time. In addition, water was pumped from the lake via the fireboat and using tankers to reach upper Killiney.

Lines for this scenario were also laid ahead of time (800 ft) since the reservoir and the capacity of the Killiney system were determined not to be sufficient to run the sprinklers and support fire fighting activities.

*Note: Killiney Beach water system only feeds part of the community – there are several other private systems like Estamont.

*Note: It was generally not safe or practical to tie directly to hydrants because of fire movement. One hydrant outside the “hot zone” was used.

Q: Were there generators brought to Killiney Beach? Were they hooked up? What was the impact?

A: The Winchester reservoir holds over 2/3 of the water in the Killiney Beach water system. It has a built-in

generator. It was active when the electricity failed and ran until the reservoir was dry.

Three additional mobile generators were delivered to the Killiney Beach water system (Killiney intake, Udell reservoir and Killarney reservoir). They were not hooked up during the event for several reasons:

- With electrical service in place, the safer and more reliable option was to have water system pumps run as usual on the electrical grid. Generators require a fuel refill approximately every 12 hours which increased risk as fuel is flammable and was determined to put life at risk.
- BC Hydro assured the Emergency Operations Centre that the electrical lines would remain intact or that there would be sufficient warning. The fire shifted more quickly than anticipated. Conditions became unsafe for electrical staff to enter the area and hook up the mobile generators.

Q: What was the impact?

A: The impact was negligible. Even if crews were able to reach the generators, the additional water supply would not have made a significant difference to the fire fighting activity. As noted above, it was predetermined that the fire boat and tanks were to act as the primary sources of water for fire suppression.

In addition, no matter what source powered the water system pumps, the reservoirs

only had capacity to run for approximately 2-3 hours. Once they ran dry (which they did after sustained use), they normally take 4-5 hours to refill even without significant water use in progress.

It was recognized ahead of time that the system would run dry. This is why other water sources were in place.

The regional fireboat

Q: How was the fireboat used and why?

A: BC Wildfire took possession of the fireboat through a provincial resource request. The fireboat's pumping system far exceeded the community water system and was used as a main source of water for firefighting. This was decided in advance, knowing that the community water systems alone could not provide the volume of water required.

Once firefighters could no longer safely use the boat as a pump, the boat moved to

actively fight the fire from the water.

This activity was interrupted several times by the need to rescue residents that had defied evacuation orders.

Use of Sprinklers

Q: How was it determined where sprinklers were deployed? Were all available used?

A: BC Wildfire provided direction on where the structural protection units were to be placed based on their structural protection plan. Not all equipment was used but rather the equipment was placed as needed to achieve the structural protection plan and in accordance with available water capacity.

Qualification of RDCO Fire Services staff

Q: Are RDCO Fire Services staff and fire department paid on call members qualified to fight wildfires?

A: Yes, RDCO Fire Services staff and members of the Fire

Departments are qualified to fight forest fires.

And to clarify, the RDCO team was acting under the direction of BC Wildfire which was incident command for the event.

Do Not Consume for Killiney Beach water system

Q: Was the Killiney Beach water system damaged in the fire?

A: Providing safe, potable water within the Canadian Drinking Water Guidelines is always the number one priority. This is regulated by IHA.

There was a loss of pressure in the distribution system. This created a negative pressure (vacuum) which could have drawn contaminants into the system.

To bring the system back into operation Interior Health Authority required an engineering review, system maintenance and testing.

The RDCO set up a temporary potable water source for residents. This is still in place. While RDCO systems are up and running again, some private systems such as Estamont are not.



Contact for more information

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