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Information bulletin Canada: Forest Fires

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Information Bulletin no. 1	Date of issue: July 21 st , 2017
Date of disaster: July 7 th , 2017	Point of contact: Chiran Livera, Senior Manager, Operations, Canadian Red Cross
Host National Society: Canadian Red Cross Society	
Number of people affected: 45,000	
N° of National Societies currently involved in the operation: Canadian Red Cross and American Red Cross	
N° of other partner organizations involved in the operation: British Columbia Provincial authorities	

This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation. The Canadian Red Cross Society will, however, accept direct assistance to provide support to the affected population. For further information, please visit www.redcross.ca

The situation

Forest fires in the province of British Columbia in western Canada have displaced 45,000 people since July 7. More than 155 fires are currently burning throughout the province, leading the Provincial Government to declare a state of emergency. To-date there have been 669 fires, burning 320,833 hectares. There are now an estimated 43,441 individuals under evacuation orders and a further 24,519 on evacuation alert. These figures

are released by the Government of British Columbia. The authorities in the province are leading the response with firefighters, emergency response personnel and equipment.

The authorities have activated local emergency response plans and are coordinating the evacuation of affected persons. The majority of the displaced persons are hosted with friends and family while many are housed in congregate shelters with information being provided through reception centres.

The weather outlook for the next weeks predicts a continuation of dry and hot weather. One of the main hazards is the shifting of the winds which continues to affect new communities with fire danger and smoke resulting in new evacuations.

The forest fires are happening during a period of dry weather conditions at the beginning of the forest fire season. The last major forest fire in the province was in 2003 which affected 50,000 persons.



Wildfires in Williams Lake, BC, July 2007. The Canadian Red Cross provided Cots, blankets, pillows and comfort kits to support emergency lodging centres.
Source: Canadian Red Cross Society

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Canadian Red Cross Society is coordinating the response with provincial and local authorities to support relief efforts. Red Cross personnel from across Canada, as well as personnel from the American Red Cross have been deployed to the province to support coordination and field operations. There are currently 129 personnel within the operation.

The Canadian Red Cross Society is providing registration for evacuees across the province online, by phone, through the Red Cross Call Centre, and in person at reception centres. 35,405 individuals have registered with the Red Cross across the province to-date. Family reunification services are provided through the call centre. Cots, blankets, pillows and comfort kits are provided to support emergency lodging centres. The Canadian Red Cross Society is also prepositioning “After Fire Clean-Up Kits” for communities with evacuation orders being lifted.

Approximately 10,776 Electronic Funds Transfers (cash transfer) of \$600 to wildfire-impacted households have been distributed through funding from the Province of British Columbia. This is assisting approximately 25,000 individuals totalling over CAD \$6.4 million as of July 19th. Financial assistance is provided in phases throughout the response cycle. Initial assistance is meant to help cover immediate needs while evacuated. As evacuees re-enter their communities, further transfers will be provided based on a set of eligibility criteria factoring in needs and other sources of support. Electronic Fund Transfers are sent via email to eligible registrants with a link to deposit directly into their bank accounts. For those unable to receive funds electronically, the Red Cross distributes cash cards in-person.

The Canadian Red Cross Society has also deployed safety and wellbeing personnel to provide mental health support, resources, and referrals for fire-affected individuals.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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For Resource Mobilization:

Information on how the Red Cross is raising funds and how to donate is available via the Canadian Red Cross Society website (redcross.ca).



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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.



The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.