



Regional Board Report

Information

To: Regional Board
From: Director of Communication & Information Services
Date: July 25, 2024

Subject: Community Readiness Public Engagement – What We Heard Report

Voting Entitlement: *All Directors – Unweighted Corporate Vote – Simple Majority (LGA s.208)*

Purpose: To receive for information a summary of public input and an outline of next steps for the Community Readiness Public Engagement initiative.

Executive Summary:

Being prepared for emergencies is crucial for everyone's safety and well-being in the face of increasing hazards such as flooding, debris flows, drought, wildfires, and extreme weather in the Central Okanagan.

The **Community Readiness Public Engagement Initiative** was the first public input opportunity designed to better understand the level of preparedness of Central Okanagan residents and businesses and their communication preferences during emergencies. Below is a summary of public input gathered in April and May of 2024 and an outline of next steps.

Recommendation(s):

THAT the Regional Board receive for information the July 25, 2024 Community Readiness Public Engagement – What We Heard report from the Director of Communication and Information Services.

Respectfully submitted by: Kari O'Rourke, Communications Officer

Report Approved by: Jodie Foster, Director of Communication and Information Services

Approved for Agenda: Sally Ginter, Chief Administrative Officer

Strategic Plan Alignment:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☒ Emergency preparedness | ☐ Truth and reconciliation |
| ☐ Health and wellness | ☐ Environment and climate – Regional priority only |
| ☐ Regional transportation | ☐ Growth and development – Electoral Area priority only |
-

Background:

From April 15 to May 31, 2024, the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) asked the communities across the Central Okanagan to share their experiences, ideas, and stories about emergency preparedness. The initiative included a short questionnaire, an idea-sharing platform, a story-sharing platform about neighbours helping neighbours, and an “Ask an Expert” feature. Staff also attended five community events across the region as well as four RDCO open houses in the Electoral Areas. Staff provided information on emergency preparedness and promoted the community engagement opportunity and additional services provided by the RDCO.

The public input received will support the shaping of the RDCO’s emergency management communication and the additional operational feedback received will support the safety of our communities within the region. The attached report presents a summary of what we heard from community members during this initiative.

Communication Strategy Goals and Key Themes

Key themes from the open comments in the questionnaire related to emergency preparedness were reviewed and correlated with the goals and objectives of the emergency management communications plan and they include:

Goal 1: Residents will know where to get information about a current Central Okanagan emergency.

Theme: Need for an Emergency Notification System to alert residents about necessary preparations.

Theme: Desire for more public announcements and education on emergency preparedness.

Goal 2: Residents will prepare for future emergencies.

Theme: Importance of accessible and clear emergency preparedness documentation.

Theme: Suggestions for bulk purchasing and selling emergency supplies at wholesale prices to residents.

Goal 3: Residents will support their neighbours to better prepare for an emergency.

Theme: Encouragement for local hubs, like public schools, to serve as resource centers during emergencies.

Theme: Promotion of community-based initiatives like fire prevention assessments and neighbourhood-based programs.

Goal 4: Increase trust between members of the community and Central Okanagan emergency officials.

Theme: There is a recognition and appreciation for the work of emergency responders and operations and the support they provide.

Theme: The need for visible initiatives to enhance community safety through emergency preparedness communication.

Theme: Calls for better communication and transparency from emergency officials.

Conclusion and Next Steps:

Additional insights from the Community Readiness initiative provides a baseline of level of preparedness and need for additional support for Central Okanagan residents and businesses. It was encouraging to learn that participants know where to go to receive local emergency information and generally feel prepared in an emergency.

The primary themes listed above highlight the community's priorities and concerns, providing valuable information for aligning future communication plans with public expectations.

The public input received will shape the strategic communications plan to support the Regional District of Central Okanagan's (RDCO) Emergency Management Program, focusing on community readiness in response to the modernized Emergency and Disaster Management Act and the Board's strategic priorities. The strategic communication plan will be complete and ready for implementation for the 2025 hazard season. Additional operational information received has been shared with emergency operations officials.

Considerations:

Organizational/External:

RDCO and Regional Emergency Program extend their appreciation to everyone who participated, and a special thank you to the regional partners and the Okanagan Regional Library that supported this work. The input will enhance the collective preparedness for emergencies, contributing to a safer, stronger, and more resilient future for all who live, work, and visit the Central Okanagan.

Considerations not applicable:

- Financial:
 - Legal/Statutory Authority:
 - Alternate Recommendation:
-

Attachment(s):

1. Community Readiness What We Heard Report Engagement Summary
 2. Community Readiness Questionnaire Response Report
 3. Community Readiness Your Say Analytics
 4. Community Readiness What We Heard Report – PowerPoint
-