



Municipal District of Pincher Creek Kenow Fire Debrief

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Background

On August 30, 2017, late in the day, a lightning strike in southeast British Columbia ignited a wildfire in a remote, mountainous areas near the Alberta/BC border. The lightning strike was recorded by Alberta Wildfire computer tracking programs. A helicopter was launched the following morning and confirmed the lightning had started a forest fire. British Columbia wildland firefighting crews were already taxed with the busiest fire season on record so crews were not able to mobilize quickly to strike the fire from the air. In addition the remote and steep terrain created a challenge as crews could not attack the fire from the ground. As a result, the fire grew and moved by west winds, spread towards Alberta and Waterton Lakes National Park.

On September 1st, Parks Canada staff began monitoring the wildfire, now labeled the Kenow Fire. Concerns were immediately noted that extraordinarily dry, record-breaking conditions and lack of ability to battle the fire effectively could result in the fire reaching the Park and the Waterton Townsite.

Initial Response

On September 3rd, Parks Canada announce the Kenow wildfire had reached the Park boundary (AB/BC) and began communications with Alberta Wildfire, MD of Pincher Creek and RCMP Pincher Creek detachment. Emergency planning includes evacuation of the Park. Western areas of the Park are closed to the public. Embers from the main wildfire ignite another fire to the north (referred to in this document as the "Castle Fire"). which will eventually lead to the evacuation of the Castle area and Castle Mountain Resort.

On September 5th, winds increase and the fire spreads toward Akamina Pass (which leads to Waterton townsite). Parks Canada activates Incident Command, an evacuation alert is issued that evening to Waterton townsite residents and remaining occupants.

On September 7th, at 13:50 hrs, Canada Parks issues a mandatory evacuation of Waterton Park and Waterton townsite of all residents, tourists and other non-essential personnel.

On September 11th, strong, late afternoon winds move the wildfire towards Waterton townsite. The fire makes the biggest growth and advancement yet, and by 23:00 hrs has gone past the townsite, moved north and east into the MD of Pincher Creek and Cardston County. This extraordinary advancement results from the wildfire covering a distance of 26 kilometers in four hours, often travelling 80 to 100 meters per minute. No lives are lost but 12 structures are destroyed, as well as some infrastructure.

Acknowledgement

This report is based on the insights, knowledge and hard-earned experience of those directly involved in, and impacted by, the September 2017 Kenow Wildfire. Kenneth Kendall Consulting and MSC Consulting Ltd would like to thank all stakeholders who provided input into this report for their openness, generosity of time and commitment to continuous improvement. This post-incident debrief is a testament to the many individuals that demonstrated untiring dedication, resourcefulness, compassion and resilience in response to this emergency event.

Executive Summary

The unfortunate outcome of a post event debrief is that individuals can judge the actions of the municipality and responding agencies with the luxury of time. What is important to remember is that the post incident debrief creates an opportunity to learn for the future so that better decisions can be made by learning from mistakes and training can focus on the gaps identified to better prepare those involved for the next event.

This executive summary will focus on the facts collected on the following pages and provide additional thoughts and an overview of the information collected by the consultants in the debriefing and interview process.

The MD of Pincher Creek has received appropriate training in emergency management. Management has been trained to ICS Level 300 as per the ICS Canada training curriculum and the training has been tested with several enhanced exercises and tabletop exercises. The municipal Emergency Management Plan was completely revamped in 2016 and adopted March 28, 2017.

Evidence shows that even a well trained and prepared municipality can have difficulty in responding to an event impacting their community when you factor in outside jurisdictional challenges, silo mindset of government agencies representing senior levels of government, poor communication or no

communication from the site management representative and personality conflicts.

In hindsight the MD of Pincher Creek was reacting to fire based on information provided by the Regional Fire Chief and Information Officer from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. This information did not clearly represent the magnitude of fire and speed at which it was moving towards their municipality. The day the fire left the park and entered the MD it had moved 26 kilometers in 4 hours. This equates to 100 meters per minute or over 6 kilometers an hour. Computer simulation mapping indicated that the fire would not leave the park. The computer simulation program was wrong as the fire had other intentions.

The municipal Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is only as capable as the information it receives from the frontline. There was limited information provided to the EOC. What information received was in some cases several hours old, not transmitted in layman's language and inaccurate. This leads to frustration for the entire EOC/municipal organization, the elected officials and more importantly the citizens.

Approximately 11 days prior to the fire impacting the MD, the fire was on the verge of entering the Waterton National Park. The administration leaders of the park requested to access the MD of Pincher municipal council chambers to set up their administrative operations. Wanting to be a good neighbor the Chief Administrative Officer, (CAO) made the municipal building available to Parks Canada. Although this was a nice gesture, it was to become a major hindrance to the municipality. The council chambers is considered the EOC for the MD and this is the room in which the municipal staff have trained in during exercises and had set the room up as an EOC during the training events. When the fire impacted the MD the administration used the kitchen/staff area and other offices as their EOC. This space was inadequate and not acceptable for emergency operations. Parks Canada should have been directed to pack up their operation and move to another location several days before the fire impacted the MD. This would have allowed the MD staff adequate time to set up the room designated as the EOC and work in a familiar work space in which they trained.

The MD of Pincher Creek does not have operational authority over the regional fire service. The Regional Fire Chief and the department is accountable to the Pincher Creek Regional Emergency Services Commission (PCRESC). During the event the MD of Pincher Creek Chief Administrative Officer/Director of Emergency Management was frustrated with the lack of timely and accurate information from the Regional Fire Chief and had requested a senior fire officer be assigned to the EOC. This did not occur after several requests. Frustration built to the point that the CAO of the MD of Pincher Creek/DEM and the CAO of the

Town of Pincher Creek, requested a meeting with the Chair of PCRESC and the Regional AEMA Field Officer. The meeting occurred and the importance of a fire officer in the EOC was expressed to the Chair. This request unfortunately to the best of our knowledge did not get actioned. A second meeting was requested of the PCRESC Chair and all of MD of Pincher Creek council to emphasize the need for representation in the EOC. At this point the MD was significantly behind the curve with accurate information.

In all the emergency exercises conducted by the MD the importance of which agencies needed to be present in the EOC was constantly reinforced to all participants. The Fire Department understood that it was absolutely necessary that the Fire Department supply a senior officer to the EOC. Yet this did not occur in the real event until out of frustration the CAO/DEM threatened to bring in another fire official from a nearby municipality to fill the role in the EOC. Ultimately the Pincher Creek Regional Deputy Fire Chief was assigned to the EOC, Thursday, September 14th, long after the fire had essentially stopped spreading. Why the PCRESC Chair did not issue a direct order is unknown.

In response to the changing dynamic of the fire and in spite of the lack of information coming from the fire line, the MD could have made some decisions to better prepare their residents. An evacuation alert could have been issued several days to a week prior to the fire entering the MD. With the alert issued it would have prompted the residents to prepare themselves for an evacuation. Unfortunately the MD relied on information from computer simulation mapping and government agencies who felt the fire was not going to leave the park. In fact the public information meeting held on September 11th presented a map showing fire location that was over 6 hours old and the public was told that they were safe that night. Yet that afternoon and evening the wind picked up the fire advanced 26 kilometers in 4 hours. Inaccurate information in the days leading up to September 11th and final public information meeting on the early evening of September 11th lulled the MD administration into under reacting. Not surprisingly the State of Local Emergency and Evacuation order given shortly after the September 11th public meeting. Many citizens thought they were not given sufficient advance warning to allow a non-emergency evacuation.

Although the municipal administration was not fully informed and thought the fire was not going to leave the park based on poor information the reality was much different. Despite poor or inaccurate information, other actions could have been taken by senior administration of the MD. Parks Canada was a guest in the MD's building and the CAO/DEM could have stepped into the council chambers and demanded hourly updates on the speed and direction of the fire from the moment the fire entered the national park. Or more importantly, Parks Canada would have easily been able to walk down the hall and provide that information to the MD on an hourly basis in hopes of keeping informed their

longtime neighbor. From this information a more robust response of MD resources and more accurate public information could have been generated.

The AEMA response and support at this event was very apparent. However the approach used was not always appreciated by some of the municipal staff. The consultants sensed a long term, less than reasonable professional relationship between senior MD of PC administration and AEMA field officers. In the Debrief Sections, the reader will see some of the comments from many staff members regarding the AEMA approach to this event. It becomes apparent that a previously strained relationship before the event challenged patience and frayed nerves and the relationship going forward is significantly damaged and requires commitment to rebuild the relationship on both sides. It was promoted that the previous departmental philosophy of AEMA field officers was a "Hand on the shoulder of the municipality" but this may not be the present day philosophy of the department. Some of the decisions made by AEMA field staff were directive in nature. Some of the decisions made by the field officers might have been technically correct but ICS fundamentals were perceived as not being followed. An example of this was to source an information officer from another municipality to assist. This decision was not cleared by the DEM. The field officer did remind the DEM later that the municipality was responsible to cover the expenses of the outsourced information officer. This did not create a relationship of respect.

The area that garnered the most frustration of the municipal administration, elected officials and especially the public was the communication process. The internal communication process was not good. The sharing of information from the frontline to the EOC was limited and inconsistent as discussed earlier. The information forwarded to the municipal staff and emergency social services staff and volunteers was limited to nonexistent in the first crucial 24 hours of the event. The elected officials were very frustrated with the lack of information and their inability to answer even simple questions of the residents. Opportunities to establish internal organizational communication lines and processes in advance of the fire leaving the park were not taken advantage of.

External communication to the public was very weak to nonexistent in the days leading up to the fire. We suspect that there was a lulled sense of urgency because of the comments made by fire officials that the fire was not likely to leave the park and the fire was not moving rapidly. However as mentioned earlier that all changed on the day of September 11th when the wind increased and fire moved very rapidly. At that point the opportunity to stay ahead of the problem with adequate information to the public was lost and now it was a matter of a hurried evacuation at night because life safety became the priority. The Information Officer for the municipality was caught in a frustrating position of limited to no information, pressure from councillors, other staff and the public.

The information officer struggled and tried to cope with the challenge. Fortunately help came from the RCMP information officer and municipal information officers from other municipalities. After some significant challenges in a 24 hour period the information team was able to get things under control and begin to manage the flow of the information. The issuing of press releases and the managing of the message improved.

The lack of information and poor communication highlighted a significant problem with this emergency response of many government agencies, three levels of government, many first responding departments and the many different agendas of all these players. The desire to stay within a corporate/government "silo" and not openly communicate and share information became terribly apparent when the Premier of the Province gave a press conference in Fort McMurray regarding the Kenow wildfire and commented on loss of buildings and status of the fire. The elected municipal representatives of the MD of Pincher Creek didn't have that information to share with the constituents. This was a major black eye to the local councillors and significant example of poor communication between government departments and levels of governments. This will continue to happen in the future unless changes in approach, knocking down of departmental silos and sincere desire to share information on all issues becomes a government department policy and a corporate culture mindset.

AEMA has indicated that they act as the conduit of information from the municipality to the province. This conduit is to flow both ways. Why wasn't the municipality informed in advance of the premier's press conference of the facts to be shared with the public? One of the fundamentals of ICS regarding communication and flow of information was not followed.

The municipal Information Officer learned through trial by fire the importance of the information process and has indicated that they are much better prepared for a future event. As we have learned in many previous disaster events, the timeliness and accuracy of information is demanded and expected by today's public. This can be a challenge in fast moving events, but this demand also emphasizes the importance of early ramp up of resources to not only respond to the affected site but also the early ramp of resources to inform those who are about to be impacted or have been impacted is critical. The public wants to know what has happened, what will happen next and when will they get the next update on information so that they can come to grips with how they are impacted and what the future looks like. These are not necessarily unreasonable requests. The advice given during the debrief process by a capable information officer is to answer three questions for the public:

- Am I safe?
- Do you know what you are doing?
- Can I trust you?

The evacuation process on the night of September 11th although hasty was successful and no loss of life occurred. Could a hasty evacuation have been avoided? The answer is yes. Evacuating people is not a decision to be taken lightly, especially when the evacuation impacts livestock. However the lessons learned in this event should and will have a lasting effect on those involved. Luckily some the residents impacted by the fire that night had already taken upon themselves to move personal belongings and livestock in advance. They didn't wait for an official evacuation notice from the municipality.

This is a valuable lesson to property owners living in areas that could be impacted by wild land fires. Emergency Preparedness Canada and Alberta Emergency Management Agency promote citizens to be self sufficient for at least 72 hours. The early evacuation of some of the residents based on their own decision is an example of being proactive, of taking personal responsibility and be self sufficient.

The citizens impacted in Division 1 of the MD felt that they were not a priority when it came to fire protection. Much firefighting equipment and sprinkler systems were relocated and assigned to the Castle Mountain area. Requests could have been made to AEMA field officers or through the Office of the Fire Commissioner for additional fire fighting resources from other parts of the province to protect structures in Division 1. To the best of our knowledge that request was not made. If the resources were in place would that have made a difference? That is hard to determine given the size, strength, and speed of the fire on the evening of September 11th. Fire personnel said it was one of the fastest moving fires that they had observed. The evening of September 11th the wildland fire fighters engaged in the fight were at risk as well, given the intensity of the fire and had to evacuate to safety.

The process of permitting the residents access to their properties was cumbersome and very frustrating. In some cases several different permits were required to be filled out depending on requirements by the provincial department or Parks Canada where your property was in relation to the evacuation area. This was confusing for the residents as to where they were supposed to go to get permits. Some of the residents were bounced between offices. This process became highly bureaucratic and unreasonable. In some cases residents disregarded the barricades and found other methods of access to the properties. The idea that permitting ranchers and farmers back to their

properties for only two hours should be reviewed in terms of realistic practicality. There were several cases that property owners did not respect the two hour time limit because they were caring for their livestock.

Conclusion

The important thing to remember is that no lives were lost. There were buildings lost but given the fire conditions, fuel load and weather conditions it is hard to conclude that those buildings lost could have been saved. Opportunities for the municipality to prepare in advance of September 11th in Division 1 were lost, and this created stress and anxiousness for its residents. The information sharing and reporting process was not satisfactory. Senior municipal administration was not getting the information they needed nor was it delivered in a fashion that created an air of urgency. The loss of the municipal council chambers to Parks Canada seriously hampered the municipal staffs' ability to establish an emergency operations centre with adequate work space.

The lack of information from the fire frontline to the CAO/DEM should have prompted the DEM to immediately request for a professional fire officer from the Provincial Operations Centre. It is possible that the chair of PCRESC did little to direct the Regional Fire Chief to provide a fire officer. Ultimately the Deputy Fire Chief was assigned on Thursday, September 14th. This assignment was day's late and created unnecessary stress and exacerbated a difficult situation.

The weak working relationship between AEMA and the impacted municipality needs to be repaired by both parties. This unfortunate relationship created unnecessary additional friction and problems between the field officers and senior administration.

The external and internal communication process was initially insufficient, but improved significantly with time, and was able to better manage the situation. The emergency social services group was able to respond to the needs of the evacuees and the volunteers and staff learned on the job. The great outcome was the wide spread support from the community to the ESS group.

The entire municipal organization was able to get itself organized and manage the situation after they realized the magnitude of the problem. All staff involved learned many lessons regarding this disaster and the speed with which events and follow on events can occur. The consultants are familiar with this administration and Council and have confidence in their collective capability and potential. This event has provided many lessons and those lessons will lead to improvements.

Areas of Discussion (Debriefing Feedback)

1. Preparedness

The feedback component of the following nine sections will be summarized and grouped. The phrase "Common Theme" will signal the reader that more than one participant, usually several, gave similar feedback statements. Many feedback statements align with more than one theme; however, in the interest of brevity, most will appear once. Comments presented to the consultants during the debriefing process are MD elected officials, government agencies, first responders, municipal staff and members of the public were invited to participate in the debriefing process. We did not add our personal observations or thoughts to these sections.

- New Regional Municipal Emergency Plan adopted in March 28, 2017 for MD of Pincher Creek
- Emergency Management Exercises: Functional Exercise 07May2017, Functional Exercise 09Nov2016; Three Tabletop exercises in 2015
- Emergency Management Training Majority of municipal staff trained up to ICS 200 level as per ICS Canada teaching curriculum. Staff trained to ICS 300 level and elected officials trained to ICS 100 level. ICS Specific Roles Training in planning and logistics provided to several senior staff in 2015
- Pincher Creek Regional Emergency Services Commission (PCRESC): developed 2012 & 2013. Established by Order in Council 2015
- Fire Smart - presented at public information sessions 2017, Chief Cox presented Fire Smart public information sessions in spring of 2017
- Regional Hazards Assessment by PCRESC was completed 2015.
- Alberta Emergency Alert Training. Public Information training

It should also be noted that public information sessions were held on the following dates;

- Sept 06: Waterton Park Parks Canada Briefing. Townsite residents and workers attended, several MD residents attended as well
- Sept 08: Twin Butte Town Hall Briefing for residents
- Sept 11: Coalfield School (Beaver Mines) Town Hall Briefing

Debrief Feedback:

Strengths

- Commission [Pincher Creek Emergency Services] has resources to protect the MD.
- Cardston County has mutual aid with Waterton National Parks and sent fire fighting aid to help protect townsites.
- South Castle had fire fighting resources, prior to the fire, for a few weeks. During that time, people asked if there were prevention activities they could do while waiting.
- Shell Canada was happy to be involved in pre-planning. Shell stood up their EOC on Tuesday, Sept 5, ready to shut in fields. They had their muster plan in place.
- AEMA had lots of warning (from early September onward) and so the necessary consequence officers in place. Overall there was good public awareness.
- As event progressed, the prior emergency management training and exercises helped, and MD staff started to become more efficient in managing information and the event. They feel they definitely learned significant lessons and will be much better prepared in the future.
- AEMA suggested to ranchers at September 8th Twin Butte Hall to, “.. get your livestock out now. It's a big ask but better now than later.” As it turned out, that was very good advice.
- The Shell Canada EOC was established. They had an evacuation plan in place. Shell shut down gas to the bottom three canyons [nearest the Castle fire]. Communication seemed to go well.
- Strong consensus from landowners that attending the Parks Canada information session on Sept 05 was beneficial. Parks Canada gave evacuation plans and preparedness plans. Parks set a very high standard in information offered to the public
- Many collectively feel one of the BIG issues is that the Parks briefing was the gold standard - they gave good information, reliable, timely, gave options, those attending felt they knew they were talking about, trusted them.
- Parks gave lots of advance warning (indirectly to residents of MD of PC). Listeners were able to connect the dots and project the probability that the wildfire was going to come into their MD.
- Parks Canada website was a good source of information. They had an interactive updated map. Proactive approach like Waterton Lake.
- ‘*Shootin’ the Breeze*’ also gave us lots of information.

- Fire analysts for Alberta Wildfire erred on the side of caution and called for evacuation when the fire was still 25 km from the Waterton townsite. Early decision to evacuate (while there was no emergency) ensured that emergency services had time to prepare before the public was made aware. This played a significant contribution to the calm and orderly evacuation and led to Waterton residents feeling safe and trusting officials knew what they were doing.

Gaps

- The MD of PC held two public information events - one at Twin Buttes on Sept 08 and another at Beaver Mines on Sept 11. They were well attended and appeared to be helpful to some residents and to other residents not enough information was provided and no definitive recommendations regarding potential evacuation trigger points were identified.
- At the Twin Butte public info meeting, Fire (PCRESC) promised a tender and potable water reservoir in Twin Butte staged by Monday. A promise made but the promise was not kept. Optics and question of keeping trust with the public.
- Twin Butte hall meeting [of Sept 08] - There was a line of experts up at front telling people how to FireSmart their property and how to be safe and be prepared to evacuate. People left the town hall meeting on Friday night feeling that there was not enough of a threat to the MD. Well attended, however many people had personal reservations with how that meeting was arranged and conducted. The fire in BC was not perceived to be much of a threat - however the Twin Butte Meeting showed the residents were uneasy with lack of information provided.
- Several landowners had tanks with fire-fighting pumps of various sizes - because from the information they were given from the Parks briefing in Waterton (but not as much information at Twin Butte) "...we could easily predict the fire was coming and we'd better rely on ourselves because we could not get any reliable info from our own MD". When Chief Cox was asked why was there so many fire trucks in Castle Resort and not in Division 1, he said it was because it's about balancing "the value of assets". The land owners later remarked... "Are we not important?"
- A common perception held by some residents: "We think we were lied to 'by the sin of omission' - even the Premier knew more than we did."
- Residents were asking, where is the fire? Are we are risk? What do you know? Many key stakeholders felt these key pieces of information were not forth coming from Municipal District of Pincher Creek.

- The meeting Monday night, Sept 11, at the Coalfield School, - Beaver Mine listeners still got the impression the fire was contained and was no threat to MD.
- A common perception held by many groups of stakeholders: Seems fire response personnel spent a lot of effort to protect Waterton town site. What did Parks Canada do to stop the fire from entering the MD of PC? What did the MD of PC do to prevent loss in their MD if the fire did come into their jurisdiction?
- One week before fire entered Waterton Park, Parks Canada had issued an alert, then voluntary evacuation notices with lots of warning during the non-emergency time they still had. So, uncertain or not about where the fire was and how much progress it was making, why didn't the MD do the same thing? Don't they share the same information?
- Of all the EOC training witnessed, especially at the EOC [MD of PC Council Chambers], it appeared to many that little of that training was implemented during the actual emergency.
- FireSmart sessions are thought to be put on in April by PCRESC but truthfully, most ranchers were calving that time of year.
- Regarding Alberta Emergency Alert: 175,000 people have the app; however, the Alberta Alert System was designed for 50,000, so that failed because of overload. (See Appendix D).
- MD municipal map has not been updated in many years.
- Several stakeholders and individuals felt strongly the MD of PC did not take wildfire threat nearly seriously enough, nor, in their opinion, was sufficient fire protection and firefighting efforts invested prior to the wildfire entering the MD. The common perception was, "days were lost" and the "MD was a day late and a dollar short".
- Resident locations were identified on Sat & Sun, Sept 9 & 10. MD of PC staff did research about where people were, houses were circled in red on maps. The RCMP tried to familiarize themselves. But the maps were not distributed in time to be of assistance to the RCMP in the field. As a point of history, MD of PC GIS had stopped tracking where the residences are some years before because of Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. On the Monday night when the wildfire entered the MD, it is uncertain whether all fire responders (Fire and RCMP) had possession of an accurate map.
- Public concerns regarding wildfire activity adjacent to Waterton Lakes National Park were raised during a meeting held at the Waterton townsite on Wednesday, September 6, 2017. As a result, an MD councilor experienced a number of phone calls from concerned residents. He felt it was important to initiate information sessions on the risk status.

- The MD was pressured by residents to create and maintain a Facebook page where they could receive regular updates. It was agreed that this would be done. It was felt that, unfortunately, their MD did not meet the public information expectation standard or even came close to satisfying the need for timely accurate information. Many believed the MD did not take the wildfire threat seriously.
- Ranchers and residents were all trying to prepare for this fire. Evacuating a ranch is difficult, it's time consuming to prepare, takes longer to do than just getting out of a house in town. Cattle are not easy to move on short notice. After many calls to MD several finally got to talk to provincial fire officials instead - had great chat with them on the phone. Cattle were moved to good location.
- Because of living right next to the Park, many expected they would get 24 hours before having to evacuate.
- There were no fire trucks in the MD that residents in Division 1 could see and they strongly believed they needed, indeed, deserved fire protection.
- Many claimed to get NO notice before being evacuated, none. When calling the evacuation hotline, messages were left but no response came from the MD. Most indicated by virtue of the little information they did get, they were motivated to prepare on their own or at least become partially prepared.
- Residents of MD of PC were concerned that the fire was already in park so why wasn't MD Pincher Creek more prepared? Witnesses at Waterton Park afternoon on Sept 6 (same day as the volunteer evacuation) clearly saw the wild fire progressing north and east.

Lessons Learned:

- A common desire, in future, is a much improved method or process that MD will adopt that will give advance notice regarding the possibly of an evacuation. Many believed the ideal would be to issue a voluntary evacuation a week ahead.
- Some residents felt a bush buggy (Wildland Fire truck) is needed for their part of the MD. Maybe at Twin Butte.
- Fire guards/breaks and other FireSmart actions need to be taken now. Fire breaks [need to be established and maintained] especially in the forested jurisdiction of the Province.
- We have long standing mutual aid with other counties. When we needed resources, they were available.
- Have municipal maps up to date, with occupant names, addresses and phone numbers marked on map or use some other records management system. Actively promote Fire Smart strategies on an ongoing basis

- Working and being involved with Ag and Forestry. With the complication of multi-jurisdictions with the fire originating in BC, would have been better if MD of PC had been in unified command earlier. The night the fire got out of the Park (Sept 11) and into the MD of PC, we had reallocate resources. PCRESC Regional Fire Service became part of unified command Tuesday early morning (Sept 12). Prior to that, unified command was only Parks Canada and Ag & Forestry. Had we been part of unified command earlier, we would have been better prepared.
- The nature of this rapid advancing fire should have been a notice to do more advanced planning especially an evacuation plan. In future, when this happens again, we need to be more proactive. Having a fire officer in the municipal Emergency Operations Centre would help us understand the gravity of the situation.
- One key stakeholder observed they were, in essence, looking from the outside in. Commended the MD of PC that it was really great that evacuation triggers had been set, but they were too close. With regard to a commonly adopted emergency response philosophy, with all due respect, they recommend in future the MD of PC get people in place early and ramp up their organization response sooner.
- Important that each jurisdiction has their own business continuity plan (BCP). Where are you going if you have to evacuate as an EOC? The best success will benefit those who already have BCP plans in a can.
- Residents offered to collect their own contact information (phone numbers, how many people were in each house, where they lived).
- The collective opinion of residents in southern divisions of MD of PC felt Shell Canada had all necessary contact information. Why didn't the MD utilize that information? There are approximately 18 residences (Sept 5 to Sept 11 was available to get names and phone numbers) for the MD to collect.

2. Response & Operations

- Aug 30: Kenow Wildfire starts in Flathead Valley, BC
- Sept 03: Wildfire spreads to continental divide (BC and Alberta)
- Sept 05: Wildfire enters Akamina Pass and drainage and Waterton National Park
- Sept 05: Wildfire has possibility of entering Castle Mountain Resort area
- Sept 11: Wildfire moves around Waterton town site
- Sept 11: Wildfire enters MD
- Sept 19: Wildfire perimeter held
- Oct 03 : Kenow Wildfire officially declared to be "under control"

See Animation on Twitter of the #Kenowfire. Incredible fire growth in a short period @ParksCanada. @CWFIS @WatertonLakesNP #Waterton #ABfire @jmlittle1968.

This animation tracks the wildfire's growth from 30 August to 13 September.

Debrief Feedback:

Strengths:

- What went well? No loss of human life.
- Early action and notification by Parks was essential to the success of their future operations. Parks set a standard early that ensured all stakeholders were informed, involved and prepared.
- Unified command; early on that was not the case, but it made sense later on to all, that unified command are able to make better decisions and effect better use of resources.
- Lots of experience gained by all who participated.
- When MD EOC was stood up, a benefit was having EOC develop plans right away, that was a good thing. Flow of information got better over time.
- Everybody worked together without sitting around waiting for orders.
- First response priority was life - that was successful. Second response priority was property - loss of a few buildings.
- MD of PC EOC staff improved as time went on
- The Town of Pincher Creek offered numerous times the use of their council chambers to facilitate a more efficient system.

Gaps

- We discussed triggers, where it came to the town site on the AB side. None of the models forecasted that the Kenow Fire would leave the park.
- The fire was a concern two weeks prior to the night run. BC could not action the fire as it was not a priority for them. BC's objective was to keep it out of AB, which they did, however, once it broadened north and south it had changed from its original run. At this point PCRESC was called to protect the Boy Scout Camps, Castle Resort and Beaver Mines.
- At the same time Parks Canada (Parks) was doing their own fire suppression planning on their land. However, it came on so fast that we were not in a situation to fight the fire, it was more a case of getting out of its way.
- When the fire came out of park, the seven tenders backed off because the fire was already into the MD, and instead focused on evacuation. Monday night 11 pm until morning of Tuesday. Mutual aid provided by Cowley, Crowsnest Pass, Willow Creek, Cardston Co.

- It is important to note, in the dark and with this type of fire there may have been no particular use for additional resources as it was a 'flight for life' situation.
 - [Rapidly changing] fire behavior and by the very nature of this fire, things were changing so quickly, that the people in the incident command were even surprised. Up-to-date information: was it timely, accurate? No.
 - When Parks (including their administrative staff) was in MD of PC council chambers this created challenges for the MD Emergency Operations Centre staff and difficulties in conducting business continuity.
 - Mandatory evacuation process had challenges - not everybody wanted to follow the rules. (10% ignored evacuation, another 10%, once allowed back in, would not leave again.)
 - Wildfire got into the Buffalo Paddock, by that point the fire was overrunning the responding PCRESC fire trucks and focus changed from fire fighting to resident evacuation. Chief Cox called for mutual aid. Fire didn't get out of Township 2, never went further.
 - EOC MD stood up on Monday [Sept 11]. At that point the activation of the EOC was too late and the struggle then became catching up to the event and getting timely information from the fire line
 - Operational periods were not established early by the MD and therefore there was no offer to help set up operational periods. Decision was long operational periods that had a significant impact on the staff. AEMA did offer assistance in this regard.
 - Standing up an EOC in a lunch room was inappropriate. No room for wall charts, maps, posters with SMART objectives, priorities, etc. Obvious lack of information coming from the front lines to the MD EOC made the EOC very ineffective.
 - Information on decisions made by MD EOC were not being adequately communicated to MD frontline staff which made their interaction with the residents difficult.
 - EOC staff were behind the curve from the beginning and the lack of information from the fire department exacerbated the situation.
-
- MD staff continued to manage the situation through the night of Sept 11, early hours of Sept 12, including mandatory evacuation declaration for Castle Mountain Resort in reaction to the fire activity that had occurred through the night. At this point there was no designation of an operational period. All staff members were concerned about fatigue, having worked through the night.
 - On Sept 12, landowners were fighting fires and there wasn't any help [fire trucks] coming to assist. It was perceived Chief Cox had access, [after

becoming part of unified command], to lots of assets, including available air protection. But really, the landowners were fighting grass fires all day long and into 22:00 hrs of the night of Sept 12 on their own.

- Five houses burned. Residents behind the barricades could see fire burning in the yard, but not one fire truck, only one house was standing. Two days after the fire went through, there were trucks everywhere, mopping up and putting out spot fires. Where were they when it really mattered?
- Losing range grass is like losing our feed factory - that's what we use to feed our cows.

Lessons Learned:

- MD of PC EOC Planning started very slowly. Change of venue from council chambers to staff kitchen was a challenge. .
- The MD of PC came together as a team on Monday, Sept 11. More lead time would have helped. At 10 pm evening of the 11th Sept the evacuation was well underway. Keeping well ahead of the advancing flames was a challenge.
- Use proper ICS forms from beginning of event would have helped.
- MD of PC staff were quite thin on the Tuesday, people were already tired out from being there from the start. Public Works felt we had more resources available than were tasked - Public Works could have done more.
- Boy Scout Camp, Castle facilities and Beaver Mines. Parks Canada were calling for more resources. So the AB Provincial Operations Centre (POC), got mutual aid from all over province: 144 fire fighters and many resources. PCRESC Fire Department had 7 fire fighters for MD and a sprinkler trailer. Trigger point hit 5 pm on Sept 11, came around Cameron Lake, but the modelling didn't predict fire to come out of Park.
- First 24 hours [Sept 11-12], it was about building perimeters and working on controlling fire advance. Parks is working on modelling (calculated later that in actual fact the fire advanced at a speed of 80 to 100 meters per minute (night advance of fire) which is approximately six km/hr.
- Recent history in Alberta has demonstrated the same operational gaps in all cases. The lack of response to a large scale emergency management threat. Look at EOC gaps in Fort McMurray and Slave Lake for example. We, as Albertans, need to start looking at these events differently. Things happened suddenly in Slave Lake and Ft McMurray. Fire is behaving faster and hotter. We need to plan further ahead than we have been.
- As soon as ICP was stood up in Waterton, there should be a representative from MD of PC in Waterton Park EOC right away to help understand the fire challenge and provide a communication link back to the municipality. This

would have helped get the MD of PC planning going sooner and with better preparation measures in place.

- When planning shows the fire is coming out of the Park and into the MD, there needs to be a shift of the Parks Canada staff out of the municipal council chambers to make room for the MD of PC to prepare.
- Provincial Operations Centre was stood up, emergency alerting [AEA] was utilized. Technology improvements are necessary because AEA could not handle the load.
- Making the decision to get ahead of a growing emergency incident is a difficult challenge. Many thought that steps were not taken early enough for the MD. The Alberta Emergency Alert and the evacuation order were issued within minutes of each other. Evacuation Alert 10:15 p.m. and Evacuation Order 10:27 p.m.

3. Evacuation

Debrief Feedback:

Strengths

- Evacuation [of Township 2 & 3] was successful, conducted largely by fire personnel. Everybody got out alive.
- Chief Cox said at one point [as the wildfire was closing in on the MD] the fire crews made the decision to retreat [not fight the fire] but to assist residents to evacuate as that was the more important priority.
- (Common Theme) The Vertical Church in Town of Pincher Creek was the ideal reception centre. Cots shipped out of Edmonton quickly, thanks to POC. Church members and minister was very accommodating. Evacuee registration process needs adjustment but Starbucks was always flowing. MD and Town had enough staff to get the reception centre up and running before the evacuation took place in the Park.
- MD of PC had plenty of volunteers offering to help. Volunteer list created has been retained. MD did not engage any volunteers, just used staff at hand.

Gaps

- Many felt, “What would I do, as a land owner, to decide whether to protect my property thereby to risk my life and maybe my loved ones? A question each of us has to answer for ourselves.”

- Regarding MD of PC evacuation planning, at 22:15 hrs on Sept 11 they put residents on voluntary evacuation alert; yet mandatory evacuation was ordered at 22:27 hrs. Not good planning.

Lessons Learned:

- (Common Theme) Reception Centre. Lots to do different - develop a better check in and checkout process for evacuees.
- Could have used more reception centre staff help. Had lots of volunteers to draw from so that was a positive.
- Media was camped out at reception centre. Information sharing needed to be improved: we did not have any press releases to give out, that would have been useful.
- Change the registration process in future. Have somebody taking phone calls. (First night had only two people as receptionists.)
- RCMP brought in lots of resources from other jurisdictions but when the officers arrived, they were unfamiliar with the MD of PC geographics so were limited in dispatching them. Many were using maps dated from 2008. Tactical evacuation went as well as could be expected, considering there was not sufficient warning on the actual fire behavior.
- Evacuees walked into reception centre, and almost immediately wanted to know who to call to get more information.
- Victim services. flow of information was very slow in beginning. We had landowners' map at centre but we didn't have enough information to show people where fire was.
- No one stayed at our reception centre. Evacuees found other places to stay for the night.
- Sandwich boards with current information would really help. News was away ahead of us, (false news) got way ahead of us. Need information and maps much sooner than we got them for this event.
- New-to-reception centre staff worked the process for first night, learned on the job. They observed the reception centre was chaotic, as our social services staff had not the training to fill out the forms. By 04:30 in the morning, the "rush of evacuees" was pretty well over. MD took care of food and water for the MD staff and EOC. As with others, staff were still coming to their bosses with normal business demands so they're doing that work too.
- Livestock issues [regarding evacuation] - ranchers sense of ownership and commitment to their cattle and horses is different than just packing up a house.

4. Stabilization & Support

Debrief Feedback:

Strengths:

- Less than 8 hours after the SOLE was declared, Chief Cox said fire perimeter was being held. (fire entered MD on Sept 11).
- SPCA handled livestock, kennels, dog and cat food at reception centre. The support was well received by evacuees.
- MD reception staff gave the evacuees a list of hotels, registration process went well, and once a sandwich board information board was erected, it was well received by people. The MD set up a phone line to answer questions, show and explain maps to show people, provide information handouts.

Lessons Learned:

- ESS Plan was helpful. An exercise focusing on reception centre would be ideal.
- Maybe in this event, some roads were closed too long. However, because fences were burned up, livestock free-roaming on roads posed a real threat to motorists.

5. Re-Entry and Recovery

Debrief Feedback:

Strengths:

- When many key stakeholders expressed concern over getting re-entry access to their own properties, a Parks Canada official said “they could do whatever they needed to” and very quickly lifted the access restrictions they had imposed.
- Re-entry package put together by MD EOC team was well done.

Gaps

- Roadblocks were set up in the MD, but residents kept asking, “why are you restricting us from accessing our own property”?
- Permitting system was not effective for land owners - who was responsible to issue permits? There were several jurisdictions issuing permits: Parks Canada, Province of Alberta. People needing access to the homes and livestock. Which included discussion on permits from Parks, and Alberta Forestry. The MD

issued a permit for gas connection, each organization managed their own. This caused confusion for residents and people on the front line.

- Fortis was in the MD EOC on Tuesday afternoon September 12th. Unfortunately the Gas Coop was not invited to be in EOC and that oversight was regrettable. Both utilities needed to be in MD of PC EOC, which should have happened earlier, and that would have helped but making the re-entry messaging needed to be less confusing.
- Not getting access, or limited access, to get back to evacuated areas was very frustrating for those people who wanted to help friends, family, and neighbors

Lessons Learned:

- Problems involved the re-entry: people wanted back in to check buildings, cattle, other property.
- Rural people have a different mindset than urban people. They are more independent and will push back to the order to evacuate.
- The permits issuance process needs work. Lots of people were in restricted areas helping their neighbors, weren't even landowners in that jurisdiction. Some ranchers would leave (evacuate) but would come back to the barricades demanding access; other ranchers never left at all, or after they were permitted to return, stayed on their property.
- There is an overlap problem of another boundary near the land that borders the Provincial Reserve Boundary. Within that secondary boundary, the Forest Protection Area, which in some cases parallels the Reserve boundary, creates another jurisdiction conflict.
- Permit system was confusing and unnecessarily complex - it needs work to streamline the process.

6. Roles & Responsibilities

Debrief Feedback:

Strengths:

- Unified command with Ag & Forestry and include mutual aid with PCRESC helped, then the resources come under umbrella of unified command.
- Chief Cox said unified command worked well, using Level One Teams from AB Ag & Forestry and Parks Canada. Those 60 people do this for a living. We were very lucky to have access to that expertise. The lesson to take from this is

having trained personnel that can come together to form a team within the Province.

Gaps

- Who was managing the fire? Several agencies were unclear who Fire Chief Cox reported to during SOLE.
- EOC pressured Chief Cox to be more forthcoming with the fire information. After Fire Deputy came to EOC, things got better because the Deputy could take the fire technical jargon report from the fire and turn it into language the EOC staff could understand.
- AEMA suggested CAO of the municipality to establish an EOC on Saturday. On the advice of the Regional Fire Chief, EOC was not established as fire was not in Waterton Park
- Insufficient information from the Pincher Creek Regional Fire Department to the municipal EOC on a regular basis created significant gaps in knowledge and situational awareness that contributed to inaccurately identifying the magnitude of the problem and the inability to provide timely information to the public.
- AEMA field officer: Many municipal employees don't understand their role. AEMA field officers were heard to say, "we are an advisory agency." Many staff in MD said first they'd heard of it. If they are a "resource" they have a cop-like attitude that is not helpful. Maybe the take-charge type is not what AEMA needs for field officers, maybe they need people with more soft people skills. They have not done a good job of selling themselves. Had four AEMA officers here - and they did what? Instead they were perceived as dictatorial, superior overseers and quality control experts.

Lessons Learned:

- The staff were asked the following question: How would you like the AEMA to help? Response from staff: Many said had they projected more of an understanding, respect for the community leaders and listened first, then rolled up their sleeves and said how can we help.
- Operational periods. Decisions need to be made regarding operational periods so emergency management people will go off shift, get rest, and come back ready to perform.
- Staff took turns going home and resting. Other than Monday night, staff were sent home following the last briefing of the day, usually held at 5:00 pm.

- Some agreed that if the incident command site (ICP) is using unified command, then the EOC has to mirror ICP. In this case Parks Canada, AB Province, PCRESC and Ag & Forestry were in unified common, so then so should be the MD of PC EOC. It is quite difficult to provide up-to-the-minute press release. Equally, for the EOC to make decisions. When the event, in this case fire, is moving fast, and the situation is changing fast, so becomes the critical importance of timely intelligence.
- EOC may have been more efficient had they developed SMART objectives, prioritizing clearly those objectives the incident could have run more effectively.
- Responsibility and decision-making ability. The question is knowing the right questions to ask. Not will the fire be in the MD tonight? The question is, "there is no emergency at this point BUT I will make the decision to get everybody out when THERE IS NO EMERGENCY. MD's response was too slow.

7. Communication

Debrief Feedback:

Strengths

- Media were taken to the look-out just north of the park boundary where they could broadcast with the smoke and fire in the distance behind them and were appreciative and cooperative.
- **(Common Theme)** MD of PC Facebook page was created with assistance from a Town of Pincher Creek employee who was part of the EOC did an excellent job. That created another tool for the Information Officers to use, helped organize media briefings, media scrums and media statements.
- In the initial stages, as the event progressed, the MD had little information to provide as script for a media release. However, to be fair, as the event progressed, the information officer provided better and more timely releases. The main focus was the safety of our land owners and constituents and we did that. Fire was quick, decisions had to be made quickly without all the information. Focus on what can WE do, as a local responsibility, to make things better in the future.
- Flow of information got better over time, however, we could of communicated more with the Parks Canada people in our building.
- Very beneficial to have Darlene Roblin, IO for MD of Foothills and Corporal Curtis Peters, RCMP Media Relations Officer assisting MD of PC information

officer. Both were suggested by AEMA. Also Leslie Lozonski, AB Wildfire was very helpful.

- From an information officer perspective, the MD of PC Information Officer learned what questions to ask, the flow of things, who to update, who is necessary to contact, and from where to get the important information.
- Communication over the weekend between Parks and MD of PC staffer went well. Started with the Waterton evacuation over the weekend.

Gaps

- **(Common Theme)** Communication (internal and external) was a problem.
- Information flow from ICP to EOC was a significant challenge.
- In the early stages MD Councillors had to “push their weight around” in order to get timely updates.
- Many participants from across the spectrum would have liked to have been better informed. Timely and sufficient information was a constant feedback comment.
- Lack of communications was a key aspect (before, during and after the fire). Updates to the public, for example, utilized the municipal website, as well as use of Alberta Emergency Alert, however the information we had was as much as 6 hours old. Automated call-out via telephone would have helped.
- Some had concerns of criticisms about being informed in a timely manner. - It may just be the way things work in a real emergency, given the difficulty of accessing and sharing information available at the time.
- Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc) would have helped as well, especially when issued by the MD as it provides information with credibility.
- **(Common Theme)** MD Pincher Creek councillors, administrators and EOC staff were not as well informed as Premier Rachel Notley. She was frequently kept informed by AEMA. Information pertinent of interest to the landowners (and home owners) should have been shared in a timely way. The Premier of Alberta, Rachael Notley, was in Fort McMurray and was giving a public briefing on Waterton Fire while we were simultaneously saying to the media there was no new information. That was poor timing and upsetting to the MD leaders. The Premier had information we didn't.
-
- Regarding [early] media statements: Uncertainty and hesitation do not represent the best image or reputation of the MD of Pincher Creek.
- Our CAO and DEM weren't getting good and timely information so it was hard for the DEM to pass it onto the rest of us.
- Tuesday, Sept 12, lots of frantic activity to get information ready. Initially there was not a liaison function with Parks Canada. They would only share information

after it had posted to their website. Lots of miscommunication. Confusion about who was going to speak on behalf of everyone.

- Stop operating in silos. Everybody needs to work together. In this case, sitting with Parks Canada in this incident, by learning and sharing intel with the MD of PC.
- With the closure of national park and provincial parks, there were so many jurisdictions in play it made information hard to put together to get a big picture. Tough to get information from British Columbia's IO. People were not trusting that information source. Lack of information means lack of decisive and timely actions.
- What would have helped immensely in the communication and intel game would have been a five-minute phone call once an hour between ICP and MD of PC EOC.
- Alberta Parks were feeding information up to POC often.
- National Parks, Ag & Forestry, AB Parks, MD of PC, AB Infrastructure, AEMA, Town of PC and RCMP, to name some of the jurisdictions. Because there were so many cooks in the kitchen there is bound to be confusion. Long standing relations helped smooth some communication lines.
- No communication from our Gov't, none of our council knew about it, several key elected officials were not invited on the [media] tour to see aftermath & impact of the fire.
- At the Sept 8 meeting at Twin Butte no sound system made it difficult for people in back rows to hear.
- The residents heard we didn't have a Facebook page. Our speakers explained FireSmart, the recent hazards assessment was explained, AEMA answered a few questions and explained Alberta Emergency Alert.
- On evening of Sept 11, the [Beaver Mines] meeting was a little better run. Community was starving for information and very appreciative of what they got. Did talk about standing up the EOC after the Beaver Mines meeting, but the decision was made not to do that. However the EOC was started in a limited response shortly after the meeting. An emergency alert was being prepared and a determination of who would be impacted.
- Once you are behind [in a disaster] you are always catching up and you will never make that time up. This doesn't go well with the public and you lose their trust. People want news. They want it, they deserve it. People will search for it and in the absence of a reliable trusted source, will create their own stories.
- Mixed messages re relation with Parks Canada in the MD building - not sure what Parks and MD were sharing about the wildfire. Whatever it was it wasn't getting to MD staff. Not until Twin Butte (Friday Sept 8) meeting did many get some sense of the concern of the residents, of the immediacy and urgency of the fire's impact on the Park and into the MD of Pincher Creek.

Lessons Learned:

- Organized media tour on September 13 was conducted to the wildfire burned out area, evacuated zones of Waterton Park and MD of Pincher Creek, Division 1 and 2; however, tour did not include all elected officials of MD of Pincher Creek.
- Chief Mountain Gas was disappointed they were not in loop much sooner with intel sharing with EOC.
- More people are needed in today's world to properly staff an Information Office (IO). If it's a big, complex, long-lasting event, the IO need at least two persons for social media, one for fact gathering, one for telephone and another for conventional face-to-face media. On big events that adds up to five IO staff.
- At the Vertical Church reception centre, the residents wanted information, but the reception centre staff had nothing to give them. It would have been nice to keep the evacuees updated.
- Suggestions that the MD of PC resident contact database needs to be improved.
- We could have been in front of this event if we had better and more timely information from the fire command.
- Some people remarked they hope everybody is in the building next time so they can get the necessary information to make timely media briefings. Some jurisdiction information officers were initially not allowed to speak, then eventually they were. So there was lots of confusion of who was authorized be a spokesperson.
- Fire representative liaison in EOC would have been very helpful. If the emergency is fire-based, and therefore the lead agency is Fire, then someone from Fire should have been there.
- The POC set-up of an internal information sharing process in an emergency was explained. At a Level 3, information is shared to POC and to all the consequence officers, where info is shared in briefings. Every ministry gets to put in their piece. All pieces are put into puzzle and shared then with the public information officers.
- If the POC has an information sharing process set up between departments so that the pieces of the puzzle can be put together.... why isn't that puzzle then shared with the impacted municipality to ensure consistency of information?

8. Relationships

Debrief Feedback:

Strengths

- Regarding AEMA's assistance via the POC, upon our request, we promptly received cots, hygiene kits, towels, etc.
- It is important to draw from different groups and gather the trained individuals to build an emergency management team. It doesn't matter from which community or organization people are from.
- Many respondents remarked that RCMP was supportive and in turn, had a great deal of support.

Gaps

- **(Common Theme)** Many thought there is a relationship and by extension, a communication problem with the POC and the AEMA with the MD of PC. Many shared the perceived idea that wildfire information went straight from the front lines to the Premier's Office rather than be shared with the MD of PC Council and EOC. The feeling was that AEMA were thinking it was a question of who was in command, that they were not here to help, but to run things; they were not assisting but were actually interfering. They [AEMA] made little or no effort to keep MD staff and in turn council informed.
- Some elected officials were invited on a media tour, along with Town Mayor and other elected officials [but not belonging to MD of Pincher Creek]. Understandably, other councillors of MD of PC were frustrated they were not invited as well. I don't think that was intentional.
- AEMA was like a math teacher. They wanted the correct answer but more than that, they wanted the calculations done their way. Field officers came in the worst times and did not explain WHY they wanted to do something. One officer interrupted and delivered what he called a "teachable moment". Bad timing, very insensitive, and antagonized us. The AEMA field officers just muddied the water.
- Six people from the Province showed up. They started giving press conferences and media tours [of Waterton townsite]. No one asked if it was OK with the DEM or MD of PC Council? The tour was conducted Wednesday, Sept 13.
- AEMA was directing our staff, giving tours of our building, all without consulting the DEM. That was in poor taste and inappropriate.
- Discussion of the importance of understanding municipal relationships. Would appear, from feedback, that it is not well understood by AEMA as an

organization. In absence of big things to do in 2017, it seemed the AEMA made the Kenow Wildfire a bigger thing than it needed to be.

- The relationship with AEMA has been strained for years which did not help. Information was provided as quickly as the municipality obtained it.

Lessons Learned:

- Parks Canada, with approximately 60 people in the MD of PC Administration Building during the day, had requested permission to occupy the MD's council chambers room (which is the MD's EOC in times of emergencies). Took Parks four days to set up [admin office equipment and IT links] and two days to dismantle. In the opinion of many, "they took it over", and were seen in other offices within the MD's admin building too. This occupation, in the opinion of many, had a detrimental impact on the MD's ability to all relevant emergency management activities of their own (assemble in one place, communicate collectively, mount posters, objectives, maps and other EOC documents on the walls, conduct effective situational reports with key ICS leads, etc). Yet some felt they were happy with that and maintained the opinion the MD still had enough room in spite of Parks Canada presence.
- Must get away from personality conflicts and organizational silos. A common theme frustrating to many (observed by many external and internal representatives) are the personal conflicts. That hampers a more effective and timely response on behalf of occupants and all people within the zone of the wildfire threat.
- A common sentiment was: If an Alert had been issued by the MD on Friday evening, Sept 8, and MD staff prepared over the weekend, eg: emergency evacuation orders and canned messages built, would that have helped residents, MD staff, and helped significantly the MD's image with the public.
- The conversation to all citizens as it needs to be for every public forum boils down to three questions: I am safe? Do you know what you are doing? Can I trust you?

9. Resiliency

Debrief Feedback:

Strengths

- Common feedback from many stakeholders in the debrief sessions voiced the sentiment that one of good things to remember was that community support has been excellent.
- Amazing community coming together after the fire. 280 people signed up to volunteer to help recover (rebuild fences - providing people and building supplies, for example).
- Several Twitter statements and media coverage on Twitter and Facebook clearly demonstrated that community support and resiliency was strong.
- Several debrief members voiced the reminder that, “put into perspective the severity of the situation: everyone was kept safe, there were a few houses lost.”
- *For an example of community resiliency, see Appendix E*

Gaps:

None documented.

Lessons Learned:

None documented.

Appendix A

AEMA	Alberta Emergency Management Agency
AB Ag & Forestry	Alberta Agriculture and Forestry
Bush Buggy	A small fire fighting unit capable of fighting grass fires offroad.
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer (for MD of PC)
DEM	Director of Emergency Management (for a municipality)
EM	emergency management
ICS	Incident Command System
ICP	incident command site (ICS term)
IO	Information Office or Information Officer (ICS term)
MD of PC	Municipal District of Pincher Creek
PCRESC	Pincher Creek Regional Emergency Services Commission, also referred to as the “Commission”
POC	AB Provincial Operations Centre (AEMA, Edmonton)
Wildfire or Kenow or Waterton Fire	Kenow Wildfire unless noted

Glossary of Terms

Appendix B

Project Methodology

The process of conducting a Post-Incident Assessment of the Kenow Wildfire (Wildfire) emergency is complex given the range of experiences, multi-jurisdictional organizations, and actions that are relevant. Because of time constraint, an informal method was utilized to achieve an understanding of what occurred in preparation for the rural and urban wildfire, as well as what occurred during the response, stabilization, and re-entry from the fire.

As part of the development of observations, findings and recommendations, Kenneth Kendall Consulting and MSC Consulting Ltd were engaged to conduct debriefing sessions to discuss the timelines, activities, and overall efficiency and effectiveness of the response, identify gaps and generate lessons learned to better prepare for future emergency management events.

It is the consultants' understanding that the Kenow Wildfire "did not do harm to any persons within the Municipal District of Pincher Creek", although some twelve structures and a little infrastructure were lost. Ken Kendall said, "We are here to do a debriefing process, to encourage feedback from the key stakeholders and from that, learn what went right, what were the gaps, what are lessons learned? Common themes will be developed during this process to assist in providing a documented report to the Municipal District of Pincher Creek. Technical detail, such as fire behavior, strategic tactical and political decisions are out of scope and not part of these debrief sessions."

This involved two methods of information gathering to complete the Post-Incident Assessment:

Data Collection:The purpose of this activity was to gather evidence of what preparedness efforts were in place prior to the wildfire, as well as to gather information on the decisions made during the response and re-entry. These were used to determine what worked well, what gaps were identified, and what opportunities exist for improvement.

For this review, data sources included: fire development maps, EOC documentation, timelines, minutes and other records as available, social media, news reports, group and one-on-one debrief meetings will be

collected to reflect events as accurate as this informal review may permit.

Stakeholder Engagement: The purpose of this activity was to gather perspectives and experiences on what worked well during the response and re-entry, what challenges were experienced, and what opportunities exist for improvement. It also gave stakeholders an opportunity to be heard. First-person anecdotal observations were encouraged, and by the process of discussions, corroborated if possible.

A range of stakeholders were involved, including municipal leaders, elected officials, government agency representatives, first responders, industry partners, ranchers and residents. A full list of stakeholders who participated can be found below.

Stakeholders Engaged in Kenow Wildfire Informal Report

- MD of Pincher Creek elected officials
- MD of Pincher Creek Administrators and staff
- Town of Pincher Creek administrators and staff
- Parks Canada
- Alberta Agriculture & Forestry Wildfire
- RCMP
- Alberta Transportation
- Residents and landowners of MD of Pincher Creek
- Pincher Creek Regional Emergency Services
- Shell Canada
- Chief Mountain Gas
- Alberta Environment
- Alberta Health Services
- Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA)
- Fortis
- MD of Foothills

Appendix C

August 30, 2017 Lightning struck the steep slopes of the Flathead drainage, British Columbia on August 30, 2017. A reconnaissance flight within one hour after lightning moved through the area shows the volatility of Kenow Wildfire. It was unsafe for firefighters to attack from the ground or aircraft to drop water because the fire started too close to nightfall.

© Parks Canada



August 31 Spot fires ignite as a result of a lightning caused fire that became the Kenow Wildfire that made its way into Waterton Lakes National Park in September.

© Parks Canada / Ryan Peruniak



Sept 03

A Parks Canada incident management team arrives to support local park resources fighting the fire. Here Parks Canada fire personnel attend one of two daily briefings to go over objectives, missions and safety protocols.

© Parks Canada / Dan Rafla



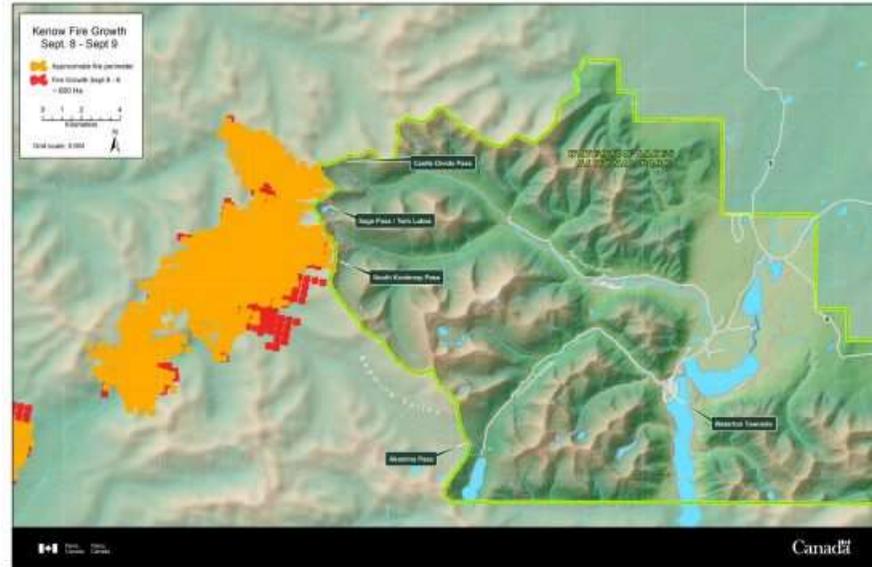
September 7

Extreme fire behavior exhibited by Kenow Wildfire while still in British Columbia.

© Parks Canada



September 8 - 9
Kenow Wildfire covers
9400 hectares in
British Columbia.
© Parks Canada



Wildfire approaches
Prince of Wales
Hotel, Waterton
Townsite.



Appendix D

Sept 20

(CBC report) Alberta Emergency Alert App slow for iPhone users during Kenow wildfire

It takes an average of 17 minutes for iPhone alerts to arrive, compared to 2 minutes for Android alerts

CBC News Posted: Sep 20, 2017 9:52 AM MT Last Updated: Sep 20, 2017 9:52 AM MT

The province says it has been aware for some time the iPhone version of its Alberta Emergency Alert app has been slow to deliver.

It takes an average of about 17 minutes for iPhones to receive alerts through the app, compared to roughly two minutes for the Android version.

That's because the iPhone's deliver rate is about one-third slower than the Android's push rate, according to the province.

More users than anticipated

And the rate of uptake was much greater than anticipated.

The Alberta Emergency Alert app was designed in 2014 with capacity for 50,000 users. Now they have 176,000 users, and of those, about 115,000 have the iPhone version. Usage of the app has grown by about 30 per cent this year.

By comparison, the Alberta Emergency Alert system has about 214,000 followers on Facebook and Twitter, and it takes about eight to 10 seconds to reach them, said Tim Trytten, team lead with the Alberta Emergency Alert program.

"It's not that [the app isn't] working, it's just not getting out there as fast as we would like it to," he said.

The app is one of 12 communication channels the province uses to get information out during emergencies, said Trytten. The others include radio, television and social media.

Appendix E

Sept 13



**ALBERTA WILDFIRE
TELEPHONE TOWN HALL**

September 13 | 7-8 pm

Representatives will be available to answer your questions.

Details at emergency.alberta.ca

Alberta
Government

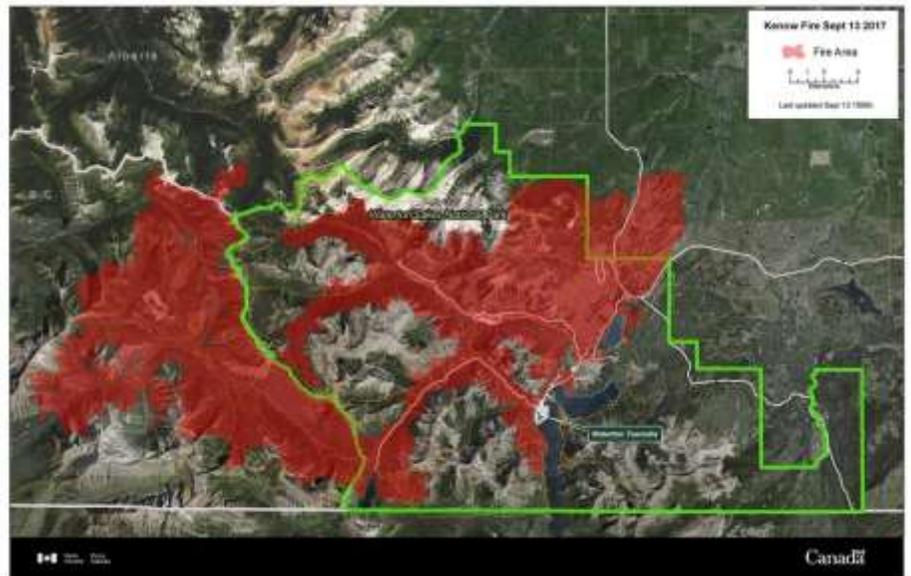
Alberta Wildfire Telephone Town Hall

Sept 13

Kenow Wildfire Hotspot map 24hr by Canadian Wildland Fire



Information System (CWFIS) September 13 Kenow Wildfire Extent



September 25

The Community Rallies. MD of Pincher Creek ranchers, residents and ratepayers come together to help each other in the aftermath of the Kenow Wildfire damage and destruction.



Appendix F

Oct 03

Parks Canada declares the Kenow Wildfire "Under Control"

Parks Canada: Snow Suppresses Kenow Fire in Waterton, No Further Spread Expected

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Tuesday, October 3rd, 2017 4:10pm

The Kenow fire in Waterton Lakes National Park is now classified as "under control" and not expected to spread any further.

The Kenow fire in Waterton Lakes National Park is now classified as "under control" and not expected to spread any further. Parks Canada says that's due - in part - to fresh snow in excess of 20 centimetres that fell on Monday. Staff will continue to monitor the situation and identify and extinguish hot spots as needed. Officials also say smoke may be visible for several weeks and hot spots could smoulder throughout the winter. Some areas of the park are open to the public; however many frontcountry and backcountry areas are closed for safety reasons. -Tina Giesbrecht

Photo Courtesy of Parks Canada

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Area Map

Castle Provincial Park and Wildland Areas

