



Okanagan Indian Band

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EOC Update

August 13, 2021

White Rock Lake fire update 2:00 PM

Way' Members,

Environment and Climate Change Canada have predicted a weather change beginning early Saturday into Sunday. There is a cold front coming in from the coast. As the colder weather comes into our area it will try to push the warm weather out. When this happens there will be strong, unpredictable gusts up to 70km per hour that have the potential to severely impact the White Rock Lake fire in our community.

BC Wildfire Service, along with Red Cross, First Nations Emergency Support Services (FNESS) and our local crews are preparing for this weather change as it will most likely increase the fire activity and potential for live embers in the surrounding areas. These teams cannot predict the potential impact to our community however, **we can be prepared.**

The EOC Director, OKIB Leadership, John Davies and BCWS have met with Incident Command and are urging all residents who are on alert to pack up their family ceremonial/cultural items and historical records/photos and move them to a friend or family member's home outside of the community.

There continues to be crews in community who are doing their best to Fire Smart homes, fortify the fire guards and structural protection. The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) and Emergency Support Services (ESS) are preparing sites outside of the community in the event that we need to move.

It is important for all those that have remained behind to understand that due to public safety concerns, BCWS and structural resources are unable to engage in suppression tactics around homes where people are known to have remained. Therefore, your presence at your home not only impacts suppression on your home but those members that live next to you and the community at large. Both the RCMP and structure protection have locations of these hold out residents and the risk they present to suppression efforts.

Chief Byron Louis spoke with the EOC team this morning and was reminded of the floods in 2018, "I remember hearing stories of our members wading chest-deep in water at 1 a.m., trying to safely evacuate everyone." This is what we need to be prepared for. We are giving as much advanced notice as possible for our people to be ready to leave. If you have a family member with mobility or health issues, it may be safer to have them stay in a place outside of the evacuation alert areas for the weekend.

We want everyone to be safe and the only way we can do that in an unpredictable event like this is to have our people and important things out of the community before the event happens.

As you may have heard at last night's community meeting, BCWS is not allowing temporary access permits to many areas. To support the wildfire suppression efforts, OKIB will be suspending all permits for the next 72 hours. In preparing yourself and family today and tomorrow, consider what you are not willing to lose, pack it up, and locate a place, preferably in Vernon, or a location where COVID 19 is not experiencing an outbreak.

The OKIB Emergency Operations center continues to monitor the situation and will provide the community with updates as we receive them.