

INTERFACE FIRES AND PUBLIC SAFETY



An interface fire is a wildland fire that puts communities and people at risk. A wildland fire in an interface area can quickly spread from the forest or grasslands to threaten people, their homes and property.

The following outlines responsibilities and stages during an evacuation, and is used consistently during all-hazard emergencies.

Municipalities and regional districts are required to have emergency plans in place to help ensure the safety of the public. If an interface fire threatens a community, local authorities work closely with Ministry of Forests and Range and/or Office of the Fire Commissioner personnel, and will implement their community emergency plans based on the latest risk and response information.

Local governments have primary responsibility for issuing evacuation alerts, orders or rescinds. However, Ministry of Forests and Range may undertake a tactical evacuation if fire suppression activities require people to leave an area for safety reasons.

The provincial emergency management structure is activated when local authorities require provincial support. This support is usually requested during larger-scale or more complex emergency situations.

Response plans include a three-stage public safety evacuation process:

1. **Evacuation Alert:** Local authorities issue a warning about an imminent threat to life and property, and people are asked to be ready to leave on short notice. When people choose to leave an area before or during the issuing of an alert this is referred to as a voluntary evacuation.
2. **Evacuation Order:** When the population is determined to be at imminent risk, local authorities issue an evacuation order and people must leave the area immediately. Local police or RCMP enforce evacuation orders.
3. **Evacuation Rescind:** An evacuation order or alert is rescinded or lifted by local authorities when it is determined to be safe for residents to return home. An evacuation order may be reinstated if a threat returns.

Local Emergency Social Services volunteers coordinate the provision of support to evacuees at designated reception centres. They may provide short-term assistance to people who are forced to leave their homes during interface fires, floods and other emergencies.