

July 25, 2021
21:00 Hours

TWO MILE FIRE – COMMUNITY MEETING RECAP

Once again, we apologize that technical difficulties did not allow us to post the meeting recording. As such, we will do our best to recap the meeting for you.

The meeting went approximately 90 minutes, with 150 people in attendance and approximately 300 on Zoom.

Comments from Alan Berry, Incident Commander, BC Wildfire Service

- The smoke clear on Saturday enough for Berry to take a flight around the whole fire. He estimates the fire at 1,000 hectares and was moving relatively slowly.
- “Amazingly good” progress was being made by fire crews.
- The focus has been on the north and south perimeter, trying to put out the first 100 feet of the fire perimeter to stop it from growing laterally towards the communities of Sicamous to the north and Swansea Point to the south.
- The area of most concern is the south end and fire guard efforts are being directed towards that area.
- “We need to continue to patrol that area and tie it into Hummingbird Creek on the south end. The south end is more at risk at higher elevation,” he said.
- Weather remains a critical factor in fire growth and more hot, dry conditions are in the forecast.

Comments from Brett Ogino, District of Sicamous Fire Chief

- Highway 97A will remain closed for the time being as there are safety concerns that tree or other debris will drop down from burned areas above and onto power lines.
- He is concerned for the safety of his fire crews driving in that area, so does not want any similar risk for the public.
- Ogino reassured the crowd that the firefighting from BCWS and local departments is of the highest standard. He noted his District of Sicamous crews, bolstered by the Malakwa, Rancho-Deep Creek and Swansea Point fire departments, have been conducting patrols and have the safety interests of Sicamous residents as their primary focus.

Comments from Derek Sutherland, Director Emergency Operations Centre

- Sutherland explained the work of the Shuswap Emergency Program's Emergency Operations Centre, which is in contact with the best fire experts in the province to help determine when evacuation alerts or orders are needed.
- Information is conveyed to local authorities, in this case Mayor and Council, who will authorize any alerts or orders.
- Any changes to add or rescind evacuation alerts or orders are made by assessing the situation multiple times daily with BCWS and working with the best information available to keep people safe. There is no set timeline on rescinding any alerts or orders. This is determined daily and residents will be alerted as soon as possible if they can return to their homes.

Comments from Terry Rysz, Mayor of Sicamous

- Mayor and council have the authority to authorize or rescind evacuation alerts or orders. They will only do that if they are confident in public safety.
- Rysz said : "Not until I know everybody is safe and we've got this under control. we don't want to see anybody get hurt. Nobody. That's why it's a tough call.
- Rysz has been up to fly the fire perimeter and was exceptionally impressed with the work of all firefighters. He gave many compliments to all volunteers, firefighters and the professionals working to manage the fire situation. He also complimented the people of Sicamous for working together and helping each other.

Comments from Cathy Semchuk, Emergency Program Facilitator

- Pointed out that one of the best things people can do to communicate with citizens who may not be Internet savvy is to have a Neighbourhood Emergency Program (NEP) to assist with spreading the word by non-electronic means.
- She would welcome a new NEP for Sicamous and more volunteers for the Emergency Support Services program to help out for the future.

Comments from Cpl. Wade Fisher, RCMP

- It is a difficult area to keep all people out, as there are many access points and resources are limited.
- More police resources are being brought in to protect the boundaries and the security of homes.

Comments from Tracy Hughes, Public Information Officer

- Sign up for the new Alertable communication service used to send alerts to residents, businesses, and visitors during critical events. Receive alerts over a wide variety of communication channels including mobile apps, text/SMS alerting, email or voice calling. The mobile app is the most recommended. Go to <https://www.csr.bc.ca/alertable> to register.
- Regularly monitor the CSRD website, www.csr.bc.ca, the Shuswap Emergency Program's (SEP) webpage at www.shuswapemergency.ca, the Shuswap Emergency on Facebook and Twitter, the CSRD's Facebook, Twitter platforms or local news sources for up-to-date and accurate information.
- We are still working with traditional media – digital, radio, TV to help spread the word.
- SEP has a communications plan and will use as many ways to reach residents in case of an Evacuation Order, including using RCMP and Search and Rescue going to homes in the affected neighbourhoods to alert them.

This will be the last information posted for July 25, unless the situation changes significantly.