

**DATE:** October 22, 2021

**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Regional District Board

**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

*J. Warren for*

**RE: Comox Valley Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program Update**

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### **Purpose**

To provide the Comox Valley Regional District Board with an update on the Comox Valley Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program (NEPP).

### **Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

For information only.

### **Executive Summary**

The Comox Valley Emergency Program is conducting a complete revision of the province's 1999 NEPP Guide and materials in partnership with a Working Group representing six Comox Valley NEPP teams as well as Habitat for Humanity. The fully completed NEPP Guidebook and its associated materials will be presented in conjunction with the education and media campaigns once finalized by the designer.

Highlights include:

- New program and material is easy to understand and simple to implement.
- Available to all Comox Valley communities, urban to rural.
- Provides 20 supporting appendices for NEPP teams, including Food Security and FireSmart.
- Includes an interactive online NEPP Neighbourhood Map and Discussion Forum.
- Will be by the CVRD, City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, and the K'ómoks First Nation.
- Building resilience will lessen the impact of a disaster on communities and local government.

Prepared by:

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**Background/Current Situation**

In 2021 the Comox Valley Emergency Program began a full revision of NEPP. There were three primary reasons for the revision:

1. To further build community resilience and capacity.
2. To make the program more appealing and user friendly. (The previous program was often seen as being difficult and demanding.)
3. The previous NEPP materials were produced in 1999 by what was then called the Provincial Emergency Program and funded by the federal Public Safety Joint Emergency Preparedness Program

For the new program to be appealing, it needed to be:

- easy to understand;
- simple to implement;
- beneficial;
- reflect the needs and wants of the neighbourhood;
- be non-threatening in both material and language;
- able to expand or contract as required; and
- supported both locally and regionally.

Although much of the material in the revised program will be newly created, a number of local governments were contacted and each agreed that we could use any portion of their NEPP plans and guidelines that reflected the needs and priorities of our program. This was very helpful and greatly appreciated. The local government’s included:

- Strathcona Regional District
- Regional District of Nanaimo
- Emergency Management Oceanside (Parksville & Qualicum Beach)
- City of Delta
- City of Mission
- District of Saanich
- Sunshine Coast Regional District
- Regional District of Central Kootenay
- City of Surrey
- City of Vancouver

NEPP materials consist of the following:

1. NEPP Guide (completion 2021)
  - a. A step-by-step, easy to understand guide designed to lead any ‘Neighbourhood Champion’ through the process of developing a NEPP Emergency Plan in their own neighbourhood and how to maintain it.
2. NEPP Pamphlet (production 2022)
3. NEPP Poster (production 2022)
4. NEPP Presentation (production 2022)
  - a. A PowerPoint and written guide used by a representative of the Emergency Program.
5. NEPP promotional video (production 2022)
6. Connect CVRD (production 2022)
  - a. Interactive map of NEPP locations that can provide individual team details

- b. Discussion Forum for NEPP teams to share ideas, guidance, concerns, etc.
- c. Q&A section
- 7. Emergency Program Support
  - a. In-person and/or virtual presentations
  - b. All materials to develop a NEPP Emergency Plan including a neighbourhood map
  - c. Mid Island Emergency Coordinators and Managers Guidebook
  - d. HELP/OKAY sign
  - e. Phone and email support
  - f. Yearly NEPP get-together and appreciation event (time and cost permitting)
  - g. Promotion and support of the FireSmart initiative
  - h. Monitoring of the Connect CVRD NEPP site
  - i. Development of a NEPP neighbourhood database for contact and support
  - j. All provided at no cost

### NEPP Promotion

As the old adage says, ‘Plan your work and work your plan’. This new program will require promotion by the emergency program and implementation within the community. To begin, we anticipate a soft launch in winter of 2021 followed up with a full education campaign in spring of 2022.

### Measure of Success

Currently there are only six NEPP neighbourhoods within the Comox Valley, two of those being on Denman and Hornby Islands. With the official kickoff campaign taking place early next year, 2022 will be the benchmark for the following year and so on. The emergency program anticipates a slow start however expects an increase in requests for NEPP presentations and an increase in the number of NEPP teams. We expect the new and existing teams will be advocates of the new program and anticipate an increase in 2023 due to promotion, encouraging feedback online and word-of-mouth. With the positive synergy developed through partnership with the new CVRD FireSmart program, we also expect to have a positive impact on the number of communities signing up for FireSmart presentations.

### Policy Analysis

On October 28, 1991, bylaw No. 1341 being “Electoral Areas A, B, and C Emergency Program Extended Service Establishment Bylaw, 1991” was adopted by the Comox-Strathcona Regional District to establish an extended service for Electoral Areas A, B, and C to provide for preparation for emergencies.

### Financial Implications

In 2021, a total of \$14,000 was budgeted between functions 270 and 271, Comox Valley Emergency Program, for the development and promotion of NEPP. For the 2022 budget year, the CVRD Communications department has estimated a further \$10,000 will be required to support the development of a full communications media plan including all staff costs, product design, and printing.

Ongoing costs will be dependent on the demand created by the new NEPP program, as well as staff and board work plan priorities.

### Interdepartmental Involvement/Implications

Besides CVEP, this initiative will also involve the Communications and Finance Departments.

### Citizen/Public Relations

This program requires community involvement to be successful. It began with the support of a working group that represented NEPP teams from across the valley as well as Habitat for Humanity. Their input helped to develop materials that are non-threatening, easy to understand and use. The

guidebook literally provides a step-by-step process to develop a neighbourhood team as well as 20 appendices that will aid the entire process. These include everything from the first neighbourhood meeting invitation through to a post-disaster checklist. To increase the success of those ‘Neighbourhood Champions’ wanting to introduce the program in their neighbourhoods, CVEP will provide ongoing support throughout the entire process.

To encourage citizen involvement and build public relations, the emergency program, with the help of Corporate Communications, anticipates having a soft launch in the winter of 2021 followed up by a full education campaign in the spring of 2022.

Communities that prepare for disaster suffer less fear, anxiety and losses. They also recover quicker. This program will enhance community preparedness.

### **Strategic Implications**

This program meets the requirements of all four drivers as identified in the CVRD 2019-2022 Strategic and Financial Plans:

- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Individuals, families, communities, and governments are all impacted financially by disasters. Preparation is key to lessening the impact of a disaster at all levels.
- **Climate Crisis and Environmental Stewardship and Protection:** The CVRD is committed to adapting and responding to climate change impacts. A key method of doing this is through individual and community preparedness.
- **Community Partnerships:** NEPP not only encourages the building of sustainable community partnerships, but through the delivery of this service the CVRD will be collaborating with these communities as well.
- **Indigenous Relations:** In keeping with our commitment to reconciliation and relationship building with the K’ómoks First Nation, they were approached through Chief and Council and have indicated they support this initiative and look forward to working in partnership to make any changes that may be required to reflect their needs.

### **Intergovernmental Factors**

Recently all local governments were asked that they provide their support of this program. Courtenay, Comox, Cumberland, the CVRD and the K’ómoks First Nation have all agreed.

Members of the Hornby Island Emergency Preparedness Committee participated on the NEPP Working Group. This committee, which coordinates neighbourhood preparedness across the island, is a sub-committee of the Hornby Island Residents and Ratepayers Association.