



What I did on My Summer Holidays...

EOC Operations and Lessons Learned during the Cariboo-Chilcotin Wildfires of 2017

Paul Berry, Comox Valley Ground Search and Rescue



Paul Berry



- ❑ Director of Instruction-Health and Safety, Comox Valley School District (Teacher, Principal)(Since 1982)
- ❑ 17 Year SAR member (Comox Valley), 500 + Operations,
- ❑ Level 2 SAR Manager, GSTL, Advanced Swift Water, Tracker, Avalanche Response, LUSAR 2
- ❑ JIBC Sessional Instructor: Search Management Ground, Search Team Leader.
- ❑ Lost Person Behaviour Instructor,
- ❑ ICS Canada Instructor-ICS 400
- ❑ Level 4 Threat Assessment Instructor(Canadian Centre For Threat Assessment)
- ❑ Contributing author: GSAR Curriculum, GSTL Curriculum, SARM Curriculum, National GSAR
- ❑ Contributing Author: Emergency Management Planning Guide for School Districts and Authorities.

Cariboo Regional District



- ❑ Located in the BC Central Interior, the Cariboo Regional District straddles Highway 97 from 70 Mile in the south to five kilometers south of Hixon in the north, from the Cariboo Mountains in the east to the Coastal Mountains in the west.
- ❑ The region covers an area of 80,262 square kilometers.
- ❑ Over 1 million hectares were impacted by wildfires.
- ❑ EOC Opened July 7 after 143 fires, mostly lightning caused erupted through the region
- ❑ Provincial State of Emergency Declared July 8

The Wildwood Fire with Dugan Lake in the upper right corner.



The Wildwood Fire burned hot in some area and patchy in others.



The Coyote Rock Fire looking toward Sugar Cane and the end of Williams Lake.



Wildfires touched the back of Wildwood community.

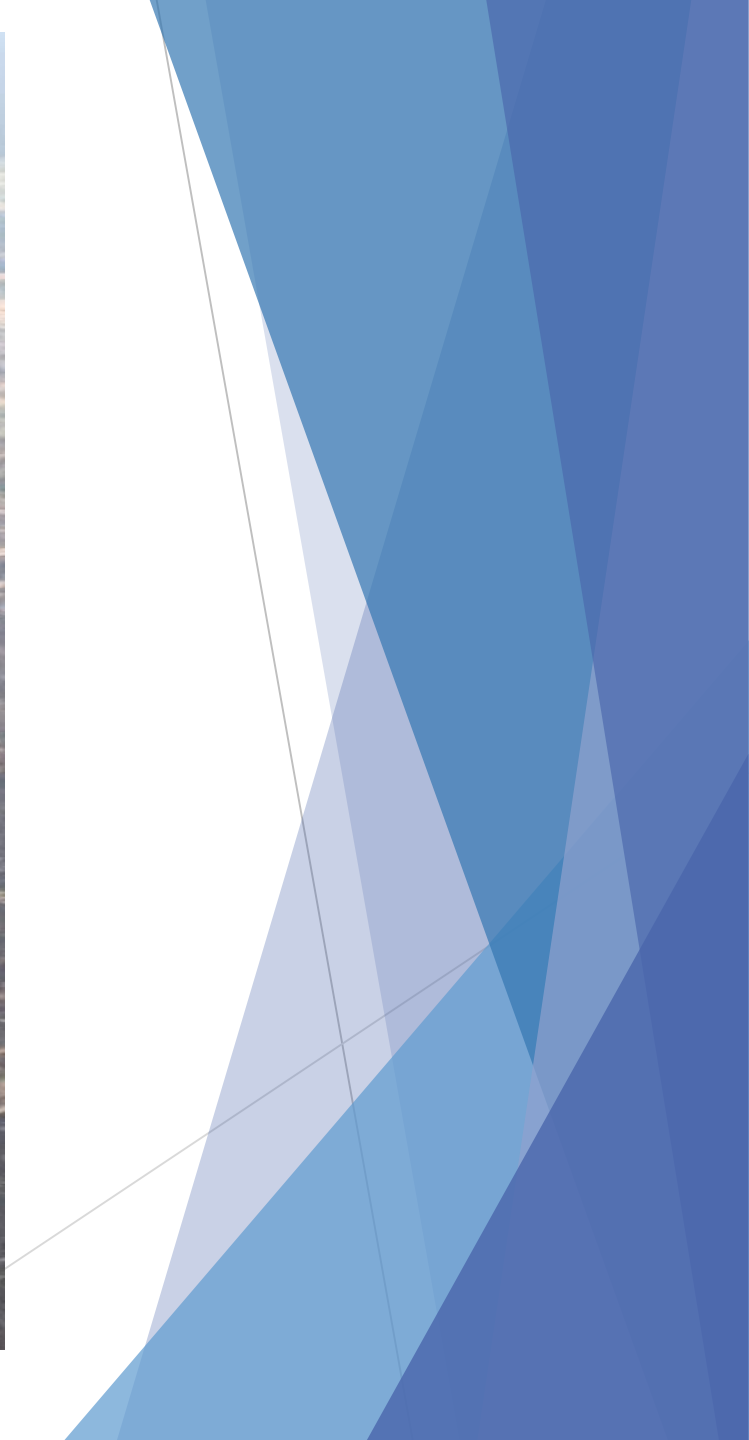


Bull Mountain north of Williams Lake makes up a portion of the White Lake Fire (east).





William's Lake Airport





July 15, 2017 180 fires impacting the Cariboo/Chilcotin and TNRD
16,000 Residents of William's Lake and the Cariboo Regional
District are Evacuated

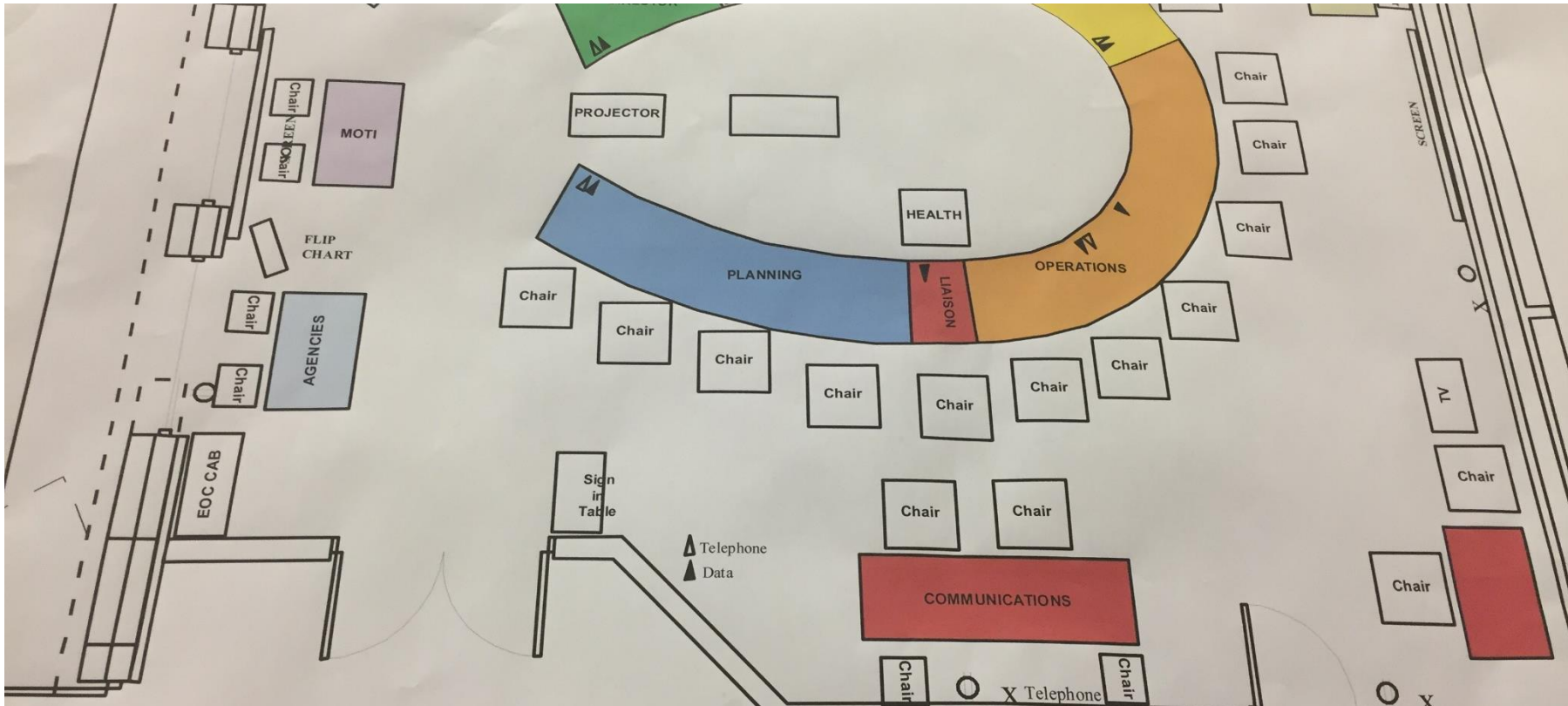


Cariboo Regional District EOC Operations

Wearing Blue and Green

First Order Issued July 7 2017-09-26





CVRD EOC at Level 3 Activation



Cariboo Regional District EOC- July 20, 2017 end of shift 2130

Advanced Planning Unit Leader



- ❑ Re-entry planning
- ❑ Safety-reduced fire risk, danger trees, roads, bridges, geotechnical
- ❑ Damage Assessment- “Ground Truthing”-Time consuming process, absolutely necessary, direct contact with home owners impacted. Social Media an effective tool
- ❑ Critical Infrastructure readiness-Hydro, water quality, gas, 911, roads
- ❑ ESS- Ongoing, management of vulnerable population, re-location transportation, group lodging
- ❑ Resiliency Centre Establishment
- ❑ Hazardous waste management
- ❑ Re-evacuation planning
- ❑ First-Nations Liaison

Resiliency Centre and Donations Centres established prior to Repatriation



Site located, contract established, Staff hired, food services, sanitation svc, security, traffic management
NGO's established- Red Cross, Samaritan's Purse
Disaster Psychosocial
Insurance Agencies
Telus
BC Hydro, CRD, City of William's Lake



Wildfires cause more than \$127 million in insured damage



"Ground Truthing"

- No Address - N 52° 11.423
spike W 121° 48.257
1 structure lost
- 1 home

- 3670 - N 52° 11.399
spike W 121° 48.029
- N 52° 11.356
W 121° 48.130
4 structures lost
2 houses + 2 outbuilding

- No Address - N 52° 11.458
spike W 121° 48.890
3 structures lost
- 1 house 2 buildings

- 3681 N 52° 11.469
spike W 121° 47.750
2 structures lost
- 1 house 1 building

1208 N 52° 11.647
deserted rd W 121° 47.312
2 structures
- 2 sheds

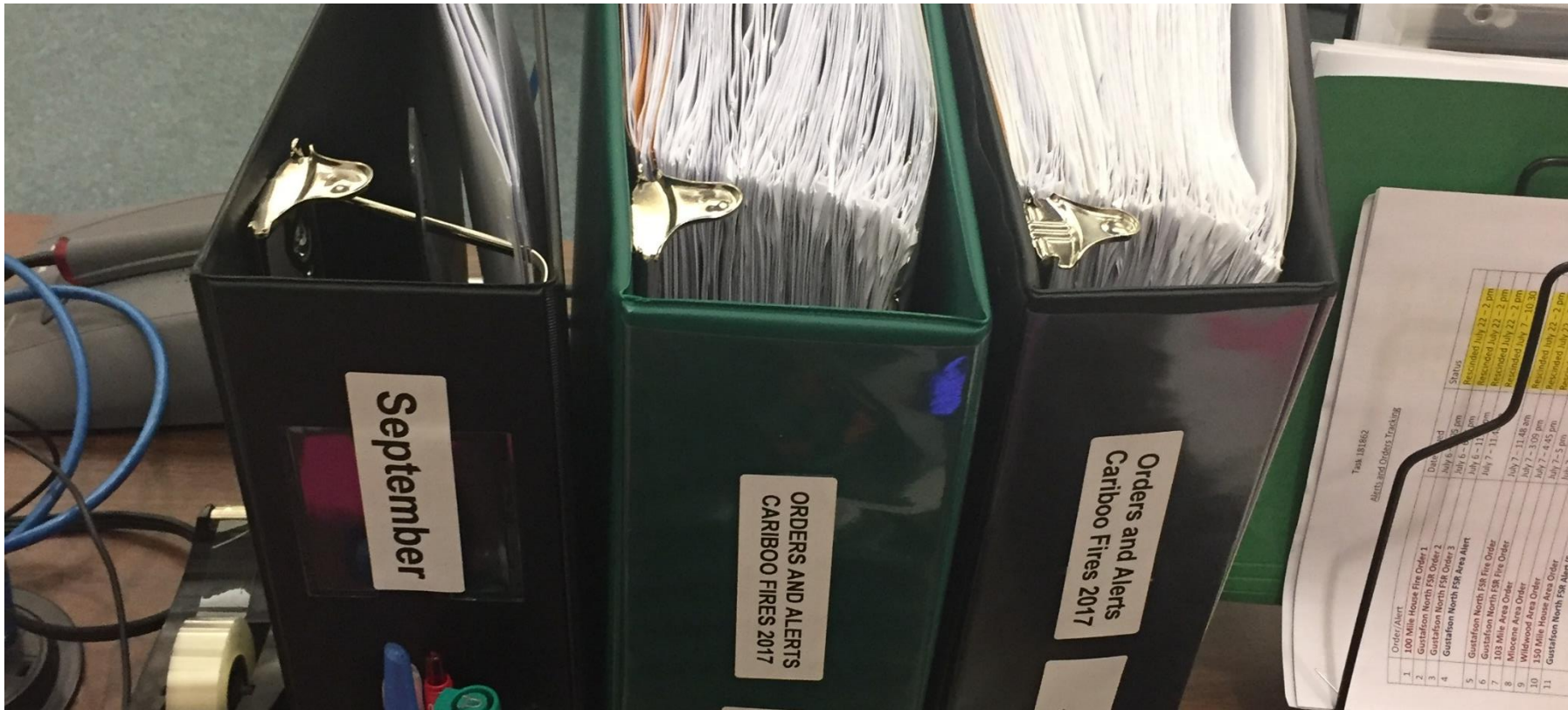




Fire impacted utilities across the region

1st Deployment Planning Chief:

- Development of the Daily EOC Action Plan input from all functions
- Development of the Org Chart and daily Situation Report to PREOC
- Participate in Fire Centre Briefing
- Participate in daily weather briefings
- Coordination and Collaboration with City Of William's Lake
- Facilitate daily Command Staff Briefings
- Documentation
- Resources Status
- Forward Planning-Repatriation, Re-evacuation
- Hazardous material management
- Shoulder to shoulder coordination with Operations and Communications



Order and Alert Documents July-September

Careful consideration of impacts required... whether issuing or rescinding

- Evacuation routes
- Resource demands-police, MOT, SAR, Fire
- Timings
- Information
- Coordination



Twice daily coordination calls were scheduled

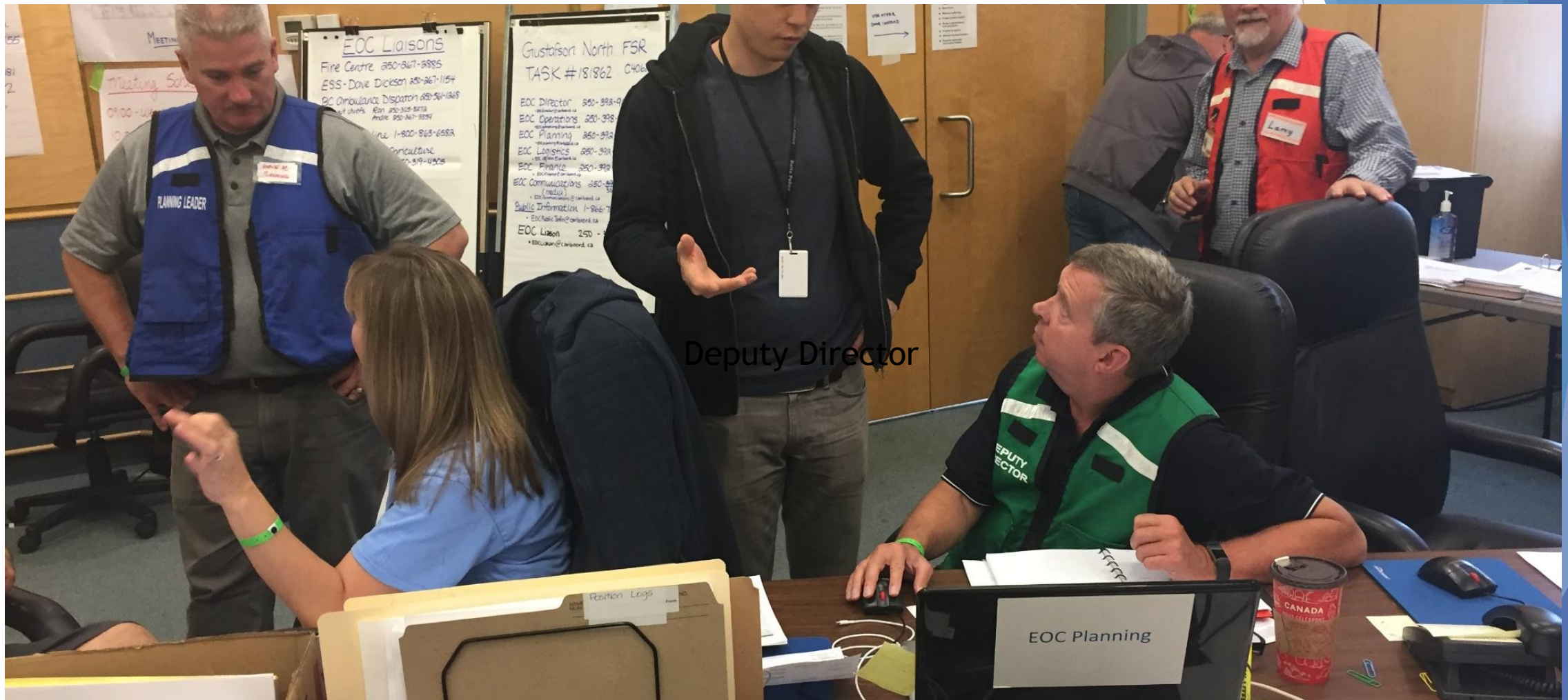
Necessary for advanced planning of additional orders, and alerts

Many longer meetings were conducted with CRD EOC Staff, Fire Behaviour Specialists in consultation with Incident commanders and liaisons from RCMP, MOTI

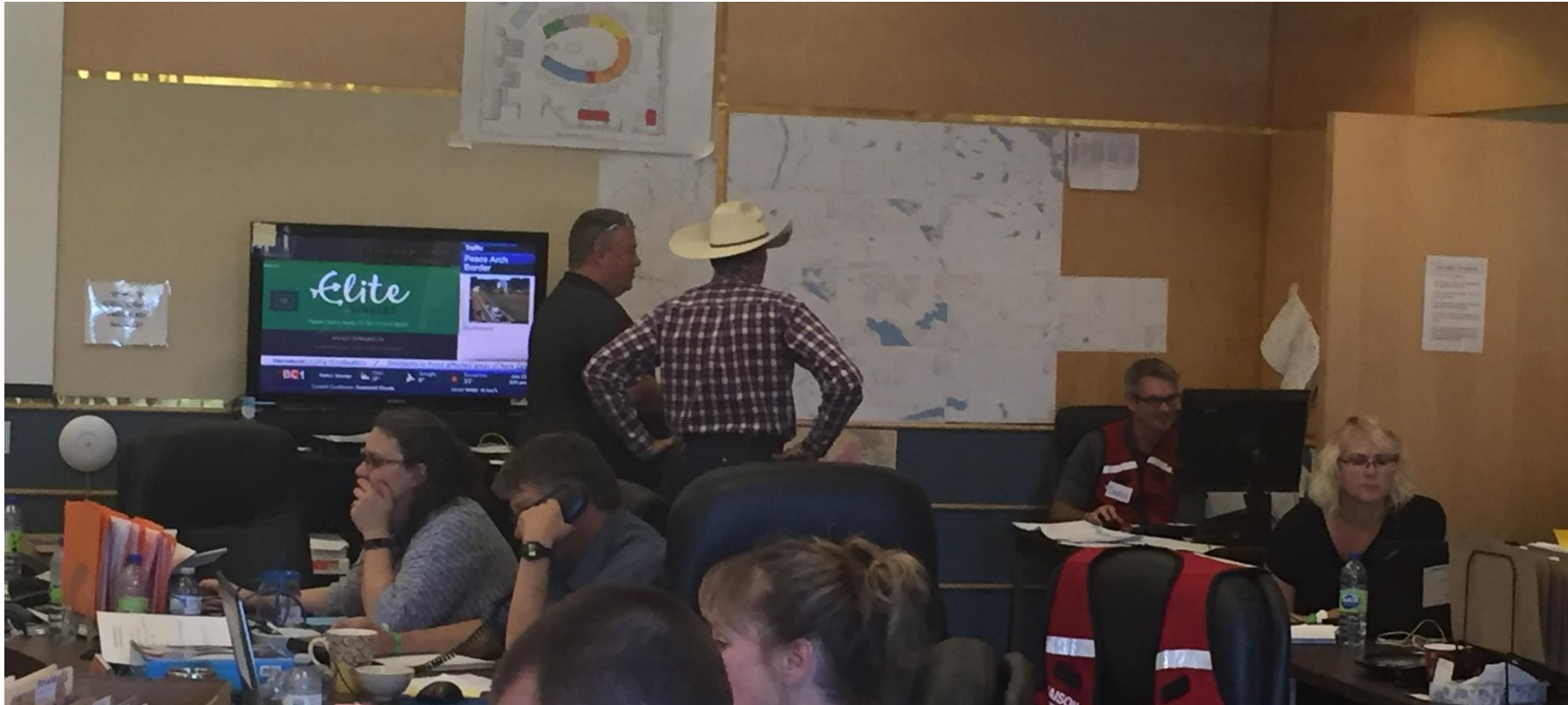
1st Deputy EOC Director

- ❑ **Responsibilities:**
- ❑ Assume the role of an EOC Director in his / her absence.
- ❑ Undertake special assignments at the request of the EOC Director.
- ❑ Ensure the efficient and effective flow of information within the EOC.
- ❑ Ensure resource requests are prioritized and tracked.
- ❑ Support EOC management by communicating policy direction and action priorities to all staff.
- ❑ Coordinate internal functions of EOC for effective operational capability.
- ❑ Monitor the health and welfare of EOC staff. Mediate and resolve any personnel conflicts.
- ❑ Facilitate shift change briefings and operational debriefings.

Deputy Director



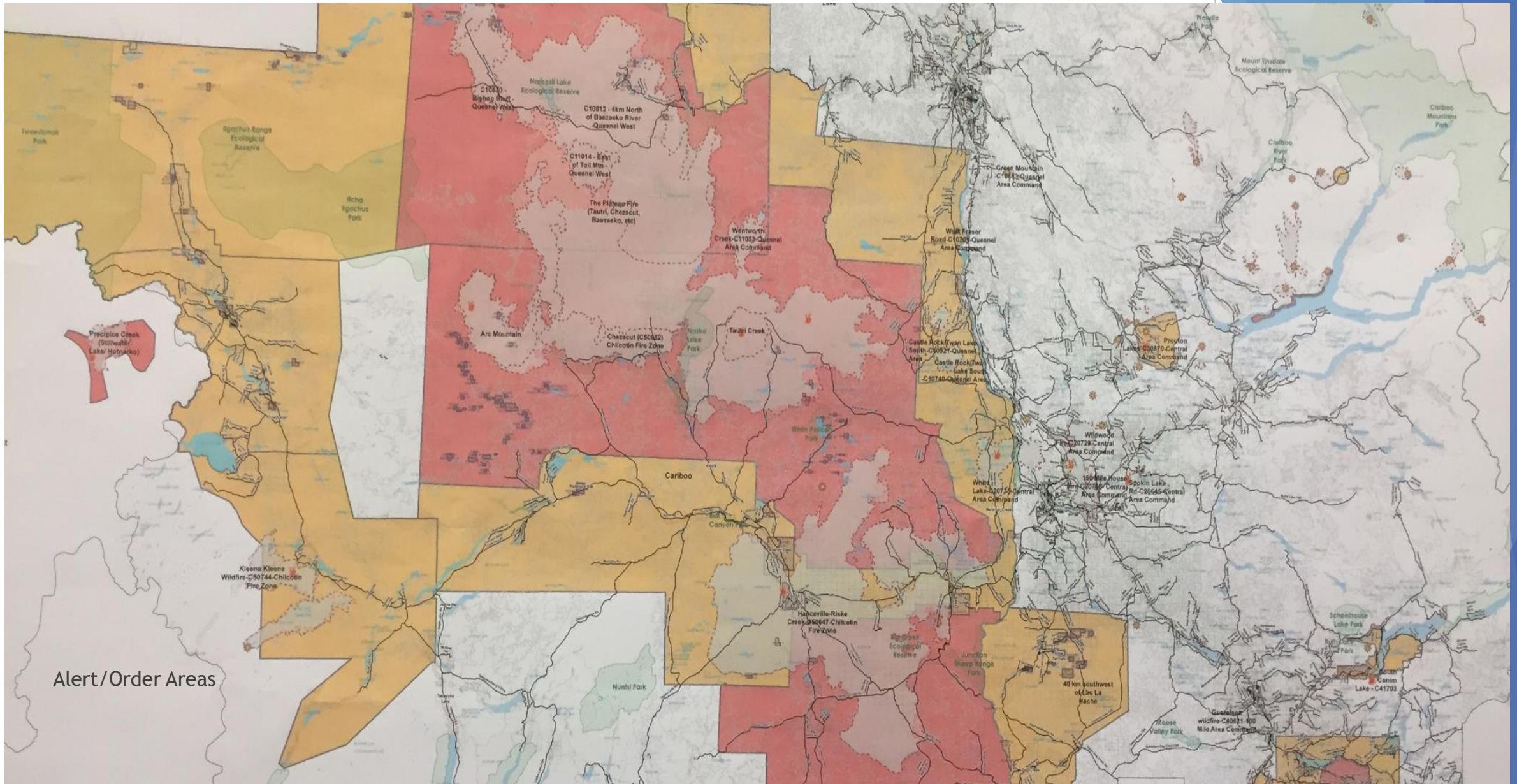
Open flow of communications within the EOC kept everyone informed and assisted with the maintenance of morale over long hours



Imbedded Agency liaison staff were essential

Forest Service, First Nations, City of William's Lake RCMP, MOTI, Ministry of Agriculture, Ranchers Association

All were very much part of the fabric of our team



Alert/Order Areas

2nd Deployment EOC Director

❑ Responsibilities:

- ❑ Exercise overall management responsibility for the coordination between emergency response and supporting agencies in the EOC. In conjunction with Incident Commander(s), EOC General Staff and Management Staff, set priorities for response efforts in the affected area.
- ❑ Provide support to local authorities and provincial agencies and ensure that all actions are accomplished within the priorities established.
- ❑ Establish the appropriate staffing level for the EOC and continuously monitor organizational effectiveness to ensure that appropriate modifications occur as required.
- ❑ Ensure that inter-agency coordination is accomplished effectively within the EOC.
- ❑ Direct, in consultation with the Information Officer, appropriate emergency public information releases using the best methods of dissemination.
- ❑ Approve the issuance of press releases, and other public information materials as required.
- ❑ Liaise with Policy Group CRD CAO (Janice Bell) and/ or Elected Officials Chair (Al Richmond)
- ❑ Ensure risk management principles and procedures are applied for all EOC activities.

We set the goal to be the
“single best source of reliable, honest and up to date information”



2nd Deployment- Sun setting on the worst fire season in BC History



- ❑ Continued Incident stabilization-normalization-schools open-roads and Hwys open
- ❑ Rescinding Orders- Re-entry Checklists and damage assessments
- ❑ Lifting Alerts-
- ❑ Long-term Recovery planning (Coordinated-Regional)
- ❑ Business Continuity for CRD
- ❑ EOC downsizing
- ❑ Documentation

Lessons Learned

- ▶ ICS- Functions, checklists, vests important
- ▶ GIS-invaluable
- ▶ Permitting- clear definition of “essential services”,
- ▶ Local Knowledge invaluable
- ▶ Information management- The sole, trusted source of factual information
- ▶ Timely response to social media myths and untruths
- ▶ Coordinated releases across municipalities, RD and First Nations
- ▶ Deployment overlap necessary to ensure continuity of knowledge base
- ▶ Sustainability and continuity of staff throughout the EOC Activation
- ▶ Build Capacity Daily... team meetings... keeping the whole staff updated
- ▶ Workloads... don't overwhelm staff... what can wait until tomorrow
- ▶ Liaisons are invaluable... need to be part of the team
- ▶ Always forward planning...
- ▶ Constant written confirmation with PREOC as staff rotate out and knowledge is lost

0715	PLANNING SECTION TEAM MEETING	✓	✓
0815	- COMMAND STAFF MEETING	✓	
0915	LOCAL STAFF READING		✓
0920	RE 1 FIRE CENTER WARNER CALL		
0915	- STAFF RELIEFING LA - RE BULKY		
0930	FINALIZE ORG / CONTACT LOCAL ACTION PLAN - TO BE REVIEWED BY DISTRICT	✓	
1030	- PLANNING TEAM MEETING - RE CONFIRM		
	• LOGISTICS REQUEST FOR GENRAL TO SUPPORT		
11:30	MEET WITH MISSOURI FIRE DEPT TRAINING OFFICER re re-entry messaging		
1:00	DEPART FOR RESILIENCE CENTER + DONATION CENTER		
	• MEET WITH COORDINATORS		
	• MEET WITH CITY REPRESENTATIVES		

Function Log

	Homes	Other Structures	Total
103 Mile	1	5	6
105 Mile	12	29	41
108 Mile	2	0	2
150 Mile	4	6	10
Hanceville	9	19	28
Plateau Fire Area	5	26	31
Quesnel Lake	0	1	1
Riske Creek	4	6	10
West of Sheridan Lake	1	0	1
Soda Creek	10	44	54
Spokin Lake/Miocene	10	26	36
Wildwood	2	5	7
TOTAL	60	167	227

Structure Loss



Elephant Hill Fire

“With over one million hectares burning in the Cariboo, the work of all firefighters and emergency personnel resulted in low structure losses on many fronts,” says CRD Chair Al Richmond. “In particular, we were very fortunate there was only one structure lost in the Cariboo Regional District as a result of the Elephant Hill fire. As we move into recovery, we encourage the entire community to support those who lost property.”



ALL ALERTS AND ORDERS HAVE BEEN LIFTED



**The EOC
is now
inactive.**

Last Alert Lifted September, 2017-09-26
EOC in operation for 73 days