



Date: 05/06/2015

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

To: Chair and Directors, Cariboo Regional District Board
And To: Janis Bell, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Lore Schick, Deputy Corporate Officer
Date of Meeting: Cariboo Regional District Board_Jun12_2015
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Short Summary:

A Late Item - Likely Community Debrief Report – Mount Polley Mine Breach

Voting:

Corporate Vote - Unweighted

Memorandum:

Director Sorley has submitted a report for the Board's consideration, regarding a Likely Community Debrief that was held on September 4, 2014 following the Mount Polley Mine tailings pond breach.

Attachments:

September 4, 2014 Likely Community Debrief Report

Financial Implications:

Unknown

Policy Implications:

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CAO Comments:

Concur

Options:

- 1) Receipt
- 2) Receipt and other action
- 3) Defer

Recommendation:

That the agenda item summary from Lore Schick, Deputy Corporate Officer, dated June 5, 2015, and attached September 4, 2014 Likely Community Debrief Report, from Director Joan Sorley, be received. *Further action at the discretion of the Board.*

Likely Community Debrief Report

September 4, 2014

To: Chair and Directors, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Joan Sorley

Purpose: The meeting was held to gather information from community residents about their experience related to the emergency response coordinated by the Cariboo Regional District as a result of the Mount Polley Mines breach August 4, 2014. More specifically, the purpose was to identify what went well, and to hear community concerns around deficiencies in the response, in order to determine recommendations for improvement to the Emergency Plan.

Scope: The scope of this report is to summarize comments and concerns expressed at the Likely community meeting held September 4, 2014 at the Likely Community Hall, and to provide conclusions and constructive recommendations based on community members' experiences as related during the meeting, in order to improve the response to a future emergency of a similar type and magnitude.

The meeting was facilitated by Murray Bertram of Just Like Real Exercises Inc. In attendance were Cariboo Regional District staff CAO Janis Bell, Communications Manager Shelly Burich, and Protective Services Manager Rowena Bastien, and Area F Director Joan Sorley. Approximately 90 community members were present. Community members were invited to share their impressions of the response, both positive, and not so positive, as well as their suggestions for improvement.

Positive comments

Several community members expressed their appreciation for the professionalism of our staff, and gratitude for the provision of the showers. Appreciation was also expressed for the many donations of bottled water from businesses and individuals.

Concerns

The concerns expressed were in the following categories:

1. The initial and ongoing trauma, as well as fear around long-term environmental and economic damage: water contamination, damage to fish, property values, job losses, business losses,...
2. Communication:
 - a. During the initial response, the Likely first responders were unable to reach Horsefly and Big Lake First Responders to coordinate evacuations from campgrounds on the other side of the breach. One first responder expressed his ongoing emotional stress regarding the possibility of people trapped in the rush of debris and tailings flow.
 - b. There was no visible presence from the CRD in the community, and community members were told not to communicate with the Area Director. Residents felt

abandoned, as there was no indication anyone was in charge, and they were hearing conflicting messages.

- c. Likely community volunteers were doing their best to get information out regarding water via phone chains and going door-to-door for an entire day, and Central Cariboo Search And Rescue personnel arrived late at night to do the same. There was no coordination between these two efforts, resulting in some duplications, as well as some gaps: Quesnel Forks, Winkley Creek and Abbott Creek were missed.
 - d. CRD has community resource lists for most communities, including volunteer contacts, but Likely was not included in the information-gathering exercise to compile these tools, as residents will not generally travel outside the community to participate. One volunteer from Likely said that he had put his name forward during this exercise, but was not contacted.
 - e. Local experts “gps-ed”, and tracked the speed of giant debris islands, and reported their findings to our EOC, only to be told to leave it to the professionals who were in the helicopter currently in the air and who were reporting that there was no risk to the bridge. The helicopter was not in the air at the time, and the local experts were concerned about the debris piling up in the narrows, not the bridge.
 - f. Websites were out of-date, and social media was unreliable. Residents felt that the province should establish one website for the Mount Polley emergency, rather than getting different pieces of information from different websites, ie. MPM, Ministry of Energy and Mines, Ministry of Environment.
 - g. Not everyone in the community has internet service, and some are on dial-up. Not everyone has phones, and not everyone gets radio reception. There is no cell service in Likely.
 - h. Concern was expressed that the map indicating the area of water use restriction was “upside-down”, and common place-names were not used (eg. “the narrows”)
3. Potable Water
 - a. Residents were told not to drink water, but there was uncertainty for the first day as to whether water would be available.
 - b. Water tank was empty when it arrived, and it was not filled until the following afternoon. There were no signs on or around the water tank, and staff at the store did not know it was there. Concern was expressed that, at least one security guard did not communicate well in English.
 - c. Water containers were not provided, and residents did not always have access to suitable containers.
 4. Showers
 - a. Initial delivery and set-up was confused: Initial location was not suitable. Logistics requirements were not well co-ordinated, and local expertise was not always used. Delays resulted from the need to wait for resources (material and people) to come from town, and the end result, in the case of the stairs, was not ideal. The stairs were not useable by anyone with mobility problems.
 - b. Showers were closed too soon after opening, while people felt they were still needed.

- c. Logistics requirements were not well communicated to remove the showers: The trucks went to the wrong location, and did not use the local person with equipment to move the shower trailers into position.
- d. One person reported that a suitable shower unit was available in Quesnel, so there was no need to bring showers in from Alberta.

Conclusions

Some of the concerns expressed relate to issues outside of local government jurisdiction, and beyond our scope of influence, eg. Property values, lost income, etc. This report will not provide recommendations on those issues. Some of the recommendations contained in this report will, however, address communication with provincial government officials in order to improve the timeliness of resources provided to communities during emergencies in future.

After the meeting, several residents thanked the Cariboo Regional District staff and director for conducting the meeting in their community, and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to express their concerns.

Recommendations:

1. The facilitator, in his opening remarks, made it clear that he was unprepared and unfamiliar with the community. He referred concerns and comments to the Manager of Protective Services, and at least twice, she argued with residents as to the validity of their concerns or suggestions. We should ensure that procedures for community debriefs are included in the emergency plan update. If an outside facilitator is used, he/she must be prepared and objective, and our procedure should include a process to ensure he/she is briefed in advance of the meeting. If Cariboo Regional District staff conduct the community debrief, we should consider providing training for them to do so in an objective manner. I also think it is not fair to ask Emergency Operations Centre staff to fill this role as it would be extremely difficult for them to remain objective.
2. The emergency plan update should include a process for ensuring that first responders receive critical incident debriefing. Additionally, the plan should provide for requesting extra resources from outside agencies as appropriate, eg. RCMP, Victim Services, trauma counselling, etc., as well as for communicating with senior government ministries.
3. We should consider holding community awareness sessions in our rural communities, and working with Emergency Management BC to develop materials for these sessions. These sessions could provide information about community preparedness, individual and community responsibilities for the immediate emergency, and the role of the community first responders as well as gather information about local expertise, resources, and volunteers to inform our files.
4. When people are not evacuated, and the emergency continues to affect the community, we should implement an on-site command centre, with an on-site commander who is a Cariboo Regional District employee. The role of this centre is multipurpose: to co-ordinate the response on the ground, to co-ordinate with local experts, resources and volunteers, to liaise with our

EOC, to provide verification of local reports, as well as to provide information and reassurance to impacted residents. Our emergency plan should provide procedures for activating, as well as de-activating this centre.

5. In addition to the emergency communication improvements currently being implemented, we should consider placing a communication bulletin board dedicated to the emergency in a central location in the community. We should also work with Emergency Management BC to provide a website and/or Facebook page dedicated to the emergency, and to update it at least daily. Our plan update should provide for various communication measures, including providing information door-to-door, holding community meetings, posting and removing signs, and mailing flyers.
6. Our emergency plan should identify procedures for delivering potable water to residents when their water source is impacted. We should work with Emergency Management BC to clarify the authorization procedure for supplying water, as well as other resources and services. We should work with EMBC to provide a list of pre-authorized services in order to remove the uncertainty, and to improve our response time.
7. We should work with Emergency Management BC to identify sources and pricing for showers and logistics requirements, as well as for other specialized equipment and supplies specific to emergencies (eg. Sandbags, sprinkler trailers). If we are not successful in that effort, we should ensure that they are identified in our emergency plan.
8. Our emergency plan should include a role for the Area Director as the public face of the Cariboo Regional District for the community, and provide for regular briefings. Additionally, we should consider re-instating the Emergency Planning Committee to assist the Board with setting policy and guiding the emergency plan updates.
9. We should report back to Likely with decisions as to changes we are making to our plan as a result of this debrief, and of our experiences with this emergency. This could be part of an awareness/information-gathering session.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Sorley,
Director, Area F