



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Williams Lake and surrounding areas return to evacuation alert

Williams Lake, B.C. – The City of Williams Lake, Williams Lake Indian Band and Cariboo Regional District announced today that residents are now allowed to return to the City of Williams Lake, Sugarcane and surrounding areas in the Cariboo Regional District. Before deciding to return, residents are encouraged to consider that wildfire activity continues in the area, air quality remains poor and the area is still on evacuation alert.

The areas that have been changed from an evacuation order to an evacuation alert include:

- The City of Williams Lake;
- Sugarcane;
- 150 Mile House;
- Fox Mountain;
- Esler;
- Pine Valley; and
- Springhouse (see map at link below for details about all CRD areas surrounding Williams Lake).

Due to ongoing wildfire operations, evacuation orders will remain in place for the following areas:

- areas north and south of Mountain House Road, including Wildwood;
- the Spokin Lake area;
- areas along Soda Creek Road and Frizzi Road;
- Soda Creek First Nation; and
- areas in the Chilcotin.

See an overview map at <http://bit.ly/2eOhZun>. For detailed maps, visit cariboord.ca.

Residents would be returning to an area that has been profoundly affected by wildfire. Wildfires remain active in the area and firefighting activities continue in the area.

Since the area remains on evacuation alert, residents must be prepared in case the area receives a future evacuation order on short notice. Local governments may not have time to go door to door should a new evacuation order be issued. Information about what to do when on evacuation alert is listed below.

It is also important to note that air quality remains poor as a result of smoke from nearby fire activity. Those with respiratory issues, small children and the elderly should consider this before they choose to return to the area.

Further, services such as grocery and health care may be limited for some time. Anyone choosing to return to the area should ensure that they return with basic necessities including food and prescriptions for up to seven days as well as a full tank of gas.

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Residents returning to the area are strongly encouraged to register for the Cariboo Chilcotin Emergency Notification System to receive a text, call or email regarding Evacuation Alerts and Orders:

<https://member.everbridge.net/index/453003085612292#/signup>

While residents are able to return to the Williams Lake and surrounding areas, nearby locations remain on evacuation order and security will be in place to enforce the order in those areas.

Transportation Back Into the Area

Both the south and north routes into Williams Lake along Highway 97 are open. Please watch for livestock and wildlife on roads around Williams Lake as many fences have burned in the area.

Within 48 hours, arrangements to return home will be made for those who were evacuated from the community via bus. Sign up for these services at your closest ESS reception centre or by calling 1-800-585-9559.

Resiliency Centre Available

A resiliency centre will be available in Williams Lake to provide information and programs of support for wildfire evacuees.

Agencies will be available at the resiliency centre to provide services to returning residents, including Red Cross, Emergency Social Services, First Nations support services, Telus, insurance agencies, Service BC, Service Canada, SPCA, social assistance agencies, mental health and counselling support and more.

The resiliency centre will be set up at the Boitanio Mall (850 Oliver Street) and will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily until need subsides. Red Cross services will be available to anyone returning to the area that requires assistance. The Red Cross can be reached at 1-800-863-6582. Contact the Resiliency Centre at 250-305-0226.

Group Lodging Unavailable in Williams Lake

Group lodging through Emergency Social Services (ESS) will not be available in Williams Lake. Evacuees from other areas within the Cariboo Regional District should remain in their current locations until this situation changes.

Assessing Danger Trees on Affected Properties

For rural properties that have been impacted by wildfire, residents should be aware there may be danger trees in wildfire affected areas. Home owners and private land owners are recommended to work with an insurance agency to have an assessment done by a qualified arborist on their private property.

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Remaining On Evacuation Alert

Since the area remains on evacuation alert, residents should remain prepared for an evacuation by:

- Having a plan to transport all family members or co-workers outside the area, should the area be brought back under evacuation order.
- Keeping essential items readily available for a quick departure, including medications, eyeglasses, valuable papers (i.e. insurance), immediate care needs for dependants and, if you choose, keepsakes (photographs, etc).
- Ensuring that any dependents are prepared for departure.
- Ensuring that pets and livestock remain in a safe area.
- Ensuring that you have accommodation options for your family, if possible. A Reception Centre will be made available again if required.
- Monitoring reliable news sources for evacuation order information. Further information will be issued as it becomes available.

City of Williams Lake residents can find information via the City of Williams Lake Facebook page at facebook.com/CityWilliamsLake and Twitter @CityWL.

For Cariboo Regional District information, please visit cariboord.ca or [@CaribooRD](https://facebook.com/CRDEmergencyOperations) or call the CRD's public information line at 1-866-759-4977.

Find Williams Lake Indian Band updates on Facebook at www.facebook.com/williamslakeband/.

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Media Contacts:

Cariboo Regional District, Emergency Operations Centre

Emily Epp, EOC Communications
250-302-9003
eocommunications@cariboord.ca

City of Williams Lake, Emergency Operations Centre

Geoff Paynton, EOC Communications
250-392-2364
gpaynton@williamslake.ca

Williams Lake Indian Band

Willie Sellars, Councillor
250-302-1883
willie.sellars@williamslakeband.ca