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For Immediate Release

## Wildwood residents can return to evacuation alert

*Williams Lake, B.C.* – The Cariboo Regional District announced today that residents are now allowed to return to portions of the Wildwood area near Williams Lake. 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 only portions of the Wildwood community, and the areas surrounding Wildwood remain under evacuation orders, which were amended at the same time.

Residents are returning to an area that has been profoundly affected by wildfire. Wildfires remain active and firefighting activities continue in the area. It is important for residents to stay out of active wildfire areas. Security is in place for surrounding areas. Interfering in an active fire area will result in crews ceasing ground and air operations potentially endangering nearby properties.

Wildwood map: <http://bit.ly/2v0TkXC>

See an overview map at <http://bit.ly/2w8EcYu>

For detailed maps, visit [cariboord.ca](http://cariboord.ca)

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 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.

The Wildwood Transfer Station is accessible.

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>

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## **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 is available in Williams Lake to provide information and programs of support for wildfire evacuees.

Agencies are 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 is set up at the Boitano Mall (850 Oliver Street) and will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily until need subsides. Red Cross services are 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 dependents 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.

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

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## Media Contacts:

### Cariboo Regional District, Emergency Operations Centre

Emily Epp, EOC Communications

250-302-9003

[eoccommunications@cariboord.ca](mailto:eoccommunications@cariboord.ca)