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For Immediate Release

Evacuation orders downgraded to alerts in Central Cariboo area

Williams Lake, B.C. – The Cariboo Regional District announced today that residents are allowed to return to portions of the Central Cariboo area near Williams Lake. Before deciding to return, residents are encouraged to consider that wildfire activity continues in these areas, air quality remains poor and the areas are still on evacuation alert.

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

- the Spokin Lake area;
- the Soda Creek and Frizzi Road area;
- areas North and South of Mountain House Road; and
- the area south of Frizzi Road to Highway 20.

Some areas in the Cariboo Regional District remain under evacuation order.

See an attached map of the new alert area: <http://bit.ly/2wNNOD9>.

For detailed maps, visit cariboord.ca.

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. Interfering in an active fire area will result in crews ceasing ground and air operations potentially endangering nearby properties.

Since these areas remain 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.

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>

Transportation Back Into the Area

The north route from Prince George into Williams Lake along Highway 97 is open. Other south routes are open as well; visit drivebc.ca for more information. Please watch for livestock and wildlife on roads around Williams Lake as many fences have burned in the area.

Re-Entry Information

A re-entry booklet is available with important considerations for returning residents including insurance information, safety, water and sewer, and clean up and food disposal recommendations. RCMP will be distributing the booklets at their checkpoints and copies will be available at the Resiliency Centre. The document is also available online here:

<http://bit.ly/2uGfOjO>

Resiliency Centre Available

A resiliency centre is available in Williams Lake to provide information and programs of support for wildfire evacuees. The resiliency centre is set up at the Boitano Mall (850 Oliver Street) and will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. until need subsides. Hours may change going forward. Contact the Resiliency Centre at 250-305-0226 for current hours.

Both Red Cross and Emergency Support Services have booths at the centre. 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.

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.

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 or [facebook.com/CRDEmergencyOperations](https://www.facebook.com/CRDEmergencyOperations) or [@CaribooRD](https://www.instagram.com/CaribooRD) or call the CRD's public information line at 1-866-759-4977.

Media Contact:

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