



May 25, 2011

Phased re-entry into Slave Lake and area starts today

Essential services allowed to enter town first

Slave Lake... The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in the Town of Slave Lake has determined that critical safety criteria have been met and a phased re-entry into the community can commence.

A four-phase plan has been developed to ensure a safe and orderly return of evacuees to the community. The plan was endorsed by the Town of Slave Lake, the Municipal District of Lesser Slave River and the Government of Alberta and included input from the Sawridge First Nation.

Phase 1 of the re-entry plan was to ensure critical infrastructure was in place. This is complete and the following criteria have been met:

- There is no longer a threat of wildfires re-starting in Slave Lake, Sawridge or the Municipal District of Lesser Slave River;
- Power is fully restored;
- Natural gas service is restored in areas that were not damaged by the fire;
- Phone service is restored to all areas not damaged by the fire. Free cell phones will be provided to residents and businesses in the damaged areas;
- Protective services are in place - fire, EMS and police; and
- Water services are restored. A boil water advisory is still in effect.

With this work complete, the EOC has determined it is safe to move forward with Phase 2 of the plan which allows for essential service workers and their families to return home. Essential service workers include health care providers, utility personnel, protective and fire service personnel, local government and community officials. **The EOC has begun contacting all identified essential service workers directly to inform them that it is important they return to the community immediately.**

The state of local emergency remains in place. RCMP will continue to operate roadblocks and will turn back any person that is not cleared to enter.

“Thanks to the tireless efforts of more than 1,400 dedicated professionals, we are prepared to start allowing essential service staff and their families back into our community,” said Karina Pillay-Kinnee, Mayor of Slave Lake. “I must stress that we are still under a state of local emergency and this is not a general call for people to return to our community - we still have a tremendous amount of work to do between now and then.”

Having essential service personnel return to the community is imperative before the town and

municipal district are ready to proceed with the final two phases of the re-entry plan:

- Phase 3 - re-establishing regional key business components. This phase will see key business owners and workers of businesses that are undamaged return to the community. This phase will also allow businesses and workers to access the town temporarily and retrieve their business vehicles and/or tools if they work elsewhere and depend on this equipment for their livelihood. The EOC will directly contact the business owners to inform them when they can return to the community; and
- Phase 4 - general re-entry of evacuees. This phase will commence on order issued by the EOC and will see the general re-entry of families. This will be supported by a traffic plan and additional information will be made available to residents prior to re-entry.

“I want to commend the evacuees for their patience,” added Denny Garratt, Reeve of the MD of Lesser Slave River. “Once all essential services are ready, we will start to allow key businesses to return home to ensure that we have a functioning community that is ready to support all displaced residents.”

“You cannot underestimate the level of detail and necessary checks that are needed to begin the re-entry process,” said Alberta Municipal Affairs Minister Hector Goudreau. “The phased-in approach allows us to ensure that the appropriate level of support is ready and available for the safe return of residents to their community.”

A copy of the Slave Lake Region Community Re-entry Plan is available online at <http://www.wildfiresupport.alberta.ca/>. Updates will be issued on the progress of the plan and posted to the site and hardcopies supplied to information and reception centres.

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For more information contact:

Provincial Operations Centre
Communications
780-644-4862

To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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Coming home - question and answers about when and how residents and businesses will return to Slave Lake and area

What is the four-phase plan?

Your local officials have organized a four-phase approach for the safe and orderly return of residents and businesses to return to the community. The phases are necessary to allow municipal officials and essential services staff and personnel the time to support people going back into their homes, including such things as turning power and gas on in each building.

- **Phase 1** - Recovery of Critical Infrastructure. This phase is complete. It entails repairs and restoration to critical infrastructure and utilities to allow essential service workers to return and perform their key functions;
- **Phase 2** - Staffing of Essential Services. This phase will see the movement of essential workers (those individuals and their immediate family that support the critical infrastructure, protective, health and fire services and governance of the community) to either their undamaged homes or temporary accommodations in the region to service all functions in Phase 1. This phase ends when all of the re-entry criteria have been met;
- **Phase 3** - Reestablishing Regional Key Business Components. This phase will see key business owners and workers of businesses that are undamaged return to the community. This phase will also allow businesses and workers to access the town temporarily and retrieve their business vehicles and/or tools if they work elsewhere and depend on this equipment for their livelihood. The EOC will directly contact the business owners to inform them when they can return to the community; and
- **Phase 4** - General Re-entry of Evacuees. This phase will commence on order issued by the EOC and will see the general re-entry of families. This will be supported by a traffic plan.

Who is being allowed to return now? Why?

A state of local emergency remains in place for the Town of Slave Lake. However, with Phase 1 complete, the EOC has determined it is safe to move forward with Phase 2 of the plan which allows for essential service workers and their families to return home. Essential service workers include health care providers, utility personnel, protective and fire service personnel, local government and community officials.

Who makes the decision on when people will be allowed back to Slave Lake and area?

The primary focus continues to be on safety for all workers and returning evacuees.

The Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) in the Town of Slave Lake and the MD of Lesser Slave River has determined that critical safety criteria have been met and a phased re-entry into the community can commence.

A four-phase plan has been developed to ensure a safe and orderly return to the community by evacuees. The plan was endorsed by the Town of Slave Lake, the Municipal District of Lesser Slave River and the Government of Alberta and included input from the Sawridge First Nation.

As criteria are met, the next phase of the plan will be implemented. Updates will be issued on the progress of the plan and posted on wildfiresupport.alberta.ca and hardcopies supplied to

information and reception centres.

What needs to happen before all evacuees can return to Slave Lake?

Before local officials can make the decision to allow all residents to return to their communities, all of the following criteria must be met:

- drinking water declared safe by Alberta Health Services;
- there is no longer a threat of wildfires re-starting in Slave Lake, Sawridge or the MD of Lesser Slave River;
- essential services including governance, utilities, 911, and protective services declared in operation by the Emergency Operation Centre;
- health services declared in operation by Alberta Health Services; and
- re-entry support, including the arrangement of temporary housing and the opening of a Community Social Centre, declared in place and operational.

How will other residents be notified when they will be allowed back in?

All residents will be allowed to return when Phase 4 is ready to be implemented.

Updates will be issued as the plan progresses and posted on wildfiresupport.alberta.ca and hardcopies supplied to evacuation reception centres.

Evacuees are advised to check with evacuation reception centres for situation updates, or visit the Slave Lake or Municipal District of Lesser Slave River websites (www.slavelake.ca or <http://www.md124.ca>). The Red Cross database will also be used to provide direct information to displaced residents, which may include facts sheets and timelines for re-entry, it is important that all evacuees be registered with the Red Cross.

Will I have power and gas as soon as I get back in my home or business?

As residents return, inspections will be conducted and gas and power will be restored on a site-by-site basis. Additional technicians will be on-hand to address any problems as systems are re-started. Residents should be prepared to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours - including drinking water.

What are the key businesses identified to return in Phase 3?

The EOC will directly contact the business owners to inform them when they can return to the community. Examples of business that will be allowed back in this phase include food, pharmacy and banking.

I have no way to get back to my home. Will I be provided with transportation back to Slave Lake when we are allowed back?

When it is deemed safe to have all evacuees return to the community, the EOC will ensure a safe and orderly return of residents. The Provincial Operation Centre will arrange for ground transportation as required. Residents with vehicles may return to the community in those vehicles.

Where can I get more information?

Call toll-free 310-4455 for current information about the wildfire situation, road closures, telephone numbers, and how to get more information for specific questions.

Updates will be posted on the wildfiresupport.alberta.ca website and hardcopies supplied to information and reception centres.

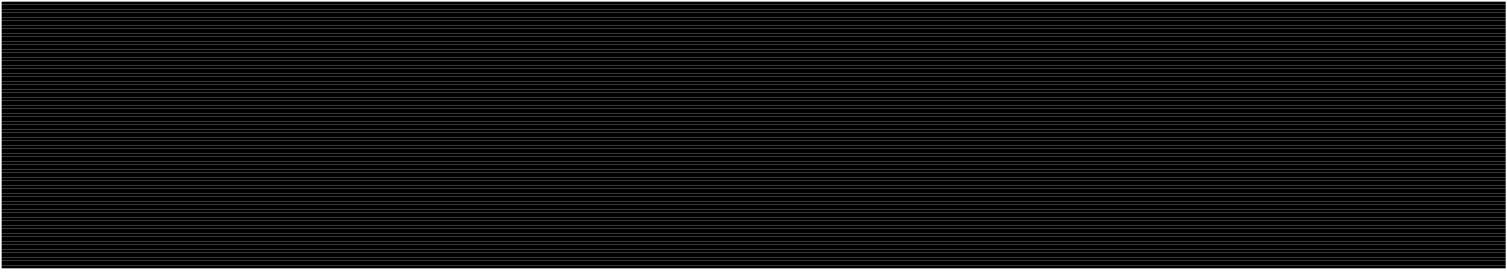
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Planning Your Return to the Slave Lake Region: What to Expect

Returning residents to the Slave Lake Region is a very complex undertaking. We are almost there, and we will need your continued patience as we move forward together. All efforts are underway to ensure a safe return to your community.

Be aware, the Slave Lake region will not return to normal for some time. We are prepared for occupancy but several services will not be fully restored immediately. You will be provided with a comprehensive re-entry information package upon your arrival in your community, which will include essential items such as local support services and utility restoration, as well as basic cleaning supplies.

- Please be aware, a number of fires are still burning in the region. If weather conditions change, there is a possibility of smoke in the air. The smoke may not necessarily be cause for alarm.
- Please do not visit fenced in areas. Your safety is our concern.
- Bring a minimum three-day supply of food for you and your pets - including drinking water - as a “boil water” advisory will remain in place.
- Essential contact information will be provided to assist with issues such as utility connections and protective services (i.e. gas, power, water, phone, police, fire, EMS).
- The pharmacy will be functional, however, for your safety, please make all efforts to fill prescriptions before returning to your community.

A Community Social Centre will open to support returning residents with a variety of services and information such as social services and counseling. Please visit www.wildfiresupport.alberta.ca or call 310-4455 for more information.

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