

August 29, 2022

Town of Qualicum Beach Emergency Response Preparedness

The emergency programs for the Town of Qualicum Beach and the City of Parksville work in unison to provide emergency support and disaster services to residents of the Oceanside area, both independently and together through the Emergency Management Oceanside (EMO) partnership.

Along with an active contingent of over 50 volunteers, EMO offers an efficient, effective, and cooperative approach to managing emergencies in our region. EMO provides professional 24/7 emergency support and has the capacity to develop and undertake preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery planning.

In the event of an emergency, response is primarily undertaken by municipal operations and administration, fire departments and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) with valued assistance from our highly dedicated volunteers. Volunteer coordination for EMO is done by an existing City of Parksville staff member that trains and supports a full contingent of volunteers to ensure that the Oceanside area, including the Town of Qualicum Beach, is fully equipped to respond to emergencies.

The following “Frequently Asked Questions” document is intended to provide clarity on the emergency program structure and the capacity of EMO to respond in the event of an emergency.

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Frequently Asked Questions

(August 29, 2022)

(This FAQ is subject to change if new or additional information becomes available)

Q. What structure is in place to coordinate a timely emergency response in the Town of Qualicum Beach?

A. The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is activated whenever an emergency is declared by Council, the Mayor, or an EOC Director. The Town's Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is the designated EOC Director for activations in the Town of Qualicum Beach. Within the City of Parksville, the City's CAO is also the EOC Director.

Both the Town of Qualicum Beach and/or City of Parksville would use the EOC as a "home base" to coordinate response efforts and facilitate communications to residents and stakeholders as necessary. In a minor emergency activation, the EOC function would be managed by as little as one person, while there could be dozens of staff in the EOC during a large-scale disaster. EOCs would be staffed by employees from other departments that are cross-trained in emergency response. Both the Town of Qualicum Beach and City of Parksville have trained staff ready to deploy in a larger emergency, serving functions such as communications, planning, operations, logistics, and finance.

In major disasters, staff from other regions could also be deployed to support local emergency response and recovery. Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC) would be the coordinating agency for the provincial government's emergency management activities. The Vancouver Island Regional Office and Provincial Regional Emergency Operation Centre (PREOC) are co-located with Emergency Management BC (EMBC) Headquarters and the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre.

Q. Does the Town of Qualicum Beach have professional staff and infrastructure in place to prepare for and respond to emergencies?

A. Absolutely. The Town of Qualicum Beach and the City of Parksville have trained staff ready to operate an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in the case of an activation. The Qualicum Beach Fire Hall is designed to accommodate a full-scale EOC activation. Furthermore, both municipalities have full-time staff in the fire department that are trained to respond to a wide variety of emergencies. Together, with other protective services such as Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Island Health, the region has capable staff available to respond.

Q. Who supports displaced residents in the event of an emergency?

A. Oceanside Emergency Support Services (OESS) is a group of dedicated volunteers who assist people displaced or directly affected by an emergency or disaster. Trained volunteers arrange food, clothing, housing, and access to emotional support for up to 72 hours after an emergency. There are currently 38 active volunteers with OESS. Volunteers are supported with materials, training, and logistical support from Emergency Management Oceanside (EMO).

Q. How would the region maintain communications during an emergency activation?

A. Emergency Management Oceanside (EMO) is supported by Oceanside Emergency Communications Team (OECT). Volunteers licensed through Industry Canada as radio operators provide communications within the region, throughout the province and around the world, using voice and digital radio equipment. Messages can be forwarded about the welfare of residents to loved ones outside of the region as well as to communicate information about the needs of the region in an emergency. There are currently 15 active volunteers in OECT.

Residents can also maintain communication in an emergency by signing up for the regional Voyent Alert System: emergencyoceanside.ca/voyent-alert

Depending on impacts to infrastructure, such as electricity and internet during an emergency, the Town of Qualicum Beach will continue to send information to residents through their website, Facebook, and email lists. The Town will also work with local news stations to ensure the public have access to essential information.

Q. What are the next steps for emergency preparedness in the Town of Qualicum Beach and City of Parksville?

A. Emergency Management Oceanside has two major projects underway to continue preparing our region for an emergency.

1. In 2019, a regional *Hazard and Risk Vulnerability Assessment (HRVA)* was developed by a consultant, CCEM Strategies. CCEM Strategies is currently working on a follow-up to this report and developing response templates for three identified hazards. This template will then be used by Emergency Management Oceanside (EMO) to develop response plans for the full list of 53 hazards identified in the HRVA. The three template responses are expected to be completed in early 2023.
2. Sybille Sanderson Collaborative Consulting is developing a business continuity plan for the Town of Qualicum Beach and the City of Parksville. The consultant is working with staff to identify critical municipal functions and resources to prepare for emergency response and recovery in a major disaster. This project is also underway and expected to be completed in 2023.
3. The Town of Qualicum Beach and the City of Parksville are currently increasing emergency program staffing, and a hiring process is underway to enhance the emergency coordination and outreach function.

Q. How can residents help with emergency preparedness and response?

A. Both Oceanside Emergency Support Services (OESS) and Oceanside Emergency Communications Team (OECT) rely on community volunteers. Although not paid positions, volunteers receive full training paid for by Emergency Management Oceanside (EMO). Training is not required to join OESS or OECT, just a desire to provide a valued service to your community when it is needed most. To find more information contact Chris James, volunteer coordinator, by email, oesd@parksville.ca or by phone, 250.937.0448.

Q. What are the benefits of volunteering:

A.

- Having a positive impact on the lives of others.
- Making a difference in your community.
- Networking and meeting new people.
- Experiencing professional growth.
- Building your resume.
- Being part of a dynamic team.
- Gaining access to free training, exciting events and opportunities.
- Working on special projects to enhance emergency management.
- Having fun!

Q. Are you a good candidate? Do you:

- Enjoy working as part of a team?
- Have concern for, and want to help, people who have been affected by disaster?
- Have capacity to respond on short notice, sometimes in the middle of the night?
- Work well under potentially stressful situations?
- Have creative and innovative solutions to problems?
- Have an interest in increasing the emergency management capacity for Oceanside region?

Glossary of Acronyms

- **CAO:** Chief Administrative Officer
- **EOC:** Emergency Operations Centre
- **EMBC:** Emergency Management BC
- **EMO:** Emergency Management Oceanside
- **OECT:** Oceanside Emergency Communications Team
- **OESS:** Oceanside Emergency Support Services
- **PREOC:** Provincial Regional Emergency Operation Centre
- **RCMP:** Royal Canadian Mounted Police