



EMERGENCY SOCIAL SERVICES RESPONSE PLAN

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Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Executive Summary.....	2
Section 1 - Navigating the Plan.....	4
Section 2 – Introducing the Plan.....	6
Section 3 – Foundations of the Plan.....	8
Section 4 - Activation and Deactivation of the Plan.....	14
Section 5 – Structure and Services.....	17
Section 6 - Operational Plans.....	29
Section 7 - Personnel, Organization and Responsibilities.....	37
Section 8 - Self Care for ESS Responders.....	40
Section 9 - Administration and Oversight.....	41

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Executive Summary

Commitment to Preparedness

LEMA is a comprehensive emergency and disaster response organization, providing a coordinated, city-wide approach to any event that may affect Lethbridge. As a collaborative entity, LEMA aligns the response objectives and priorities of the City of Lethbridge, LFES, and LPS to ensure an effective, unified response.

LEMA is committed to preparing the community for all potential hazards. Guided by the *Alberta Emergency Management Act*, the agency not only maintains readiness for the City of Lethbridge but also aims to provide support to neighboring communities when required.

Dedicated to building resilience, LEMA seeks a balance that optimizes resources and leverages partnerships. Collaboration, continuous training, and inclusive support for all community members are central to our mission.

Emergency Social Services

Emergency Social Services (ESS) is the branch of Emergency Management dedicated to supporting people affected by emergencies. ESS provides temporary assistance to individuals and families displaced or impacted by an event.

ESS services focus on meeting the basic needs of individuals, households, and communities during and after emergencies. While traditionally designed for short-term activations of 72 hours or less, support that can extend for weeks.

ESS is generally not activated for personal disasters, as other community resources are better suited to assist in such situations. ESS support is deployed only when community resources are overwhelmed, and the response has been authorized by the appropriate authority.

The ESS Response Plan

The ESS Response Plan defines roles and responsibilities in the event of the Plan activation. Details include:

- Activation, and deactivation, including different response scenarios according to the magnitude of the event.
- Procedures for evacuation, reentry and recovery
- Provisions for the primary services to evacuees, including food and lodging
- Provisions for specialized services for evacuees, such as transportation
- Volunteer management
- Communication procedures

Section 1 - Navigating the Plan

The ESS Response Plan is built on a framework that supports a cohesive and comprehensive emergency response. Each section is designed to address a specific aspect of emergency support and can function independently, offering flexibility and responsiveness in a variety of scenarios.

While the plan is designed to serve as a primary response resource for ESS responders at all levels, members of the public are also invited to read the plan.

If you are an employee with the City of Lethbridge...

You need to know what to do before a major emergency occurs. You should know what your specific role and duties are during an emergency. To understand what is expected of you, or to get started on becoming an ESS responder, start by reading Section 7: *Personnel, Organization and Responsibilities*.

If you are member of the ESS response team...

You will need to understand your role in a response and the ESS response component within the broader response to an emergency. Understanding your role and executing it competently is vital to ensuring the safety of yourself, your co-responders and the public. To understand what is expected of you, or to get started on becoming an ESS responder, start by reading Section 7: *Personnel, Organization and Responsibilities*.

If you are a member of an assisting agency or supplier...

You need to know how the City of Lethbridge plans to respond to emergencies of different scope and scale from an ESS perspective. It's important to understand what opportunities for collaboration might exist and/or how the city might need your help and expertise in such situations. You can find this information in Section 6: *Operational Plans*.

If you are a member of the public...

It's valuable for you to understand what plans the City of Lethbridge has in place to support the community during an emergency. It is still essential, however, for you to assess your own risks and complete your own personal or family emergency plan.

Incident Command System Organization

The Incident Command System (ICS) is a structured approach that supports efficient and coordinated management of Emergency Social Services (ESS) operations. It brings together facilities, resources, staff, processes, and communications under a unified organizational framework.

ICS has three main purposes:

1. **To ensure effective management and coordination of incidents** – ICS provides a standardized structure that organizes people, resources, and processes so incidents can be managed safely and efficiently.
2. **To establish clear lines of authority and communication** – ICS ensures unity of command, meaning each individual reports to only one supervisor, reducing confusion and duplication of effort.
3. **To enable flexible, scalable response to incidents of any size or type** – ICS can expand or contract depending on the scope and complexity of the incident, making it applicable to everything from small local emergencies to large-scale disasters.

ICS Structure

Every incident requires a standardized approach to management: the situation needs to be recognized and assessed, a plan of action created, and the necessary resources deployed to resolve it.

The Incident Command System has five major management activities.

1. **Incident Command**

Sets the objectives, strategies and priorities and has overall responsibility.

2. **Operations – “The Doers”**

Manages operations to ensure objectives for the incident are met.

3. **Planning – “The Thinkers”**

Supports the plan by tracking resources, collecting and analyzing information and maintaining documentation.

4. **Logistics – “The Getters”**

Provides resources and services needed to support the incident objectives.

5. **Finance/Administration – “The Payers”**

Monitors all costs related to the incident and provides financial, procurement, time and cost analysis.

Section 2 – Introducing the Plan

Approach to ESS

The *Alberta Emergency Management Act* specifies that local authorities are responsible for preparing their own emergency response plans, inclusive of emergency social services. Additionally, there is legislation, including local bylaws, that directs LEMA with the service level and response that is expected for ESS activation.

LEMA adopts a people-centered approach to ESS, addressing the needs of both evacuees and responders. We are dedicated to delivering services that respect the diversity of our region and ensure a response environment that prioritizes not only physical safety but also the emotional and psychological well-being of all individuals involved.

Understanding Emergency Social Services

ESS offers short-term support to maintain the well-being of evacuees and response workers during crises. This support may include essentials such as food, lodging, clothing, transportation, and personal services.

In the event of an emergency, ESS will mobilize its resources within hours. However, depending on the scale of the event, response times may be delayed. Individuals and organizations should be prepared to sustain themselves independently for a minimum of 72 hours. During this period, evacuees are encouraged to begin securing longer-term assistance by contacting insurance providers, family, friends, or exploring other available resources.

Public education on personal emergency preparedness is essential to help individuals reduce the impact of disasters on themselves and their families.

The ESS Response Plan

The ESS Response Plan outlines how ESS will address immediate, essential needs of individuals, households and communities affected by emergencies. ESS services are provided as part of response to, and recovery from, emergencies and could include re-entry and recovery supports.

The activation of ESS does not usually occur for personal disasters as there are alternate community resources to assist individuals faced by a personal disaster. It does not provide detailed instructions for specific emergencies but rather takes an all-hazards approach. As a result, the plan offers general guidelines and community resources to effectively handle any situation.

The ESS program is also responsible for organizing and training volunteers. It's essential to ensure that response activities are conducted by competent individuals and to use the expertise of ESS staff and other volunteer organizations to support the emergency response safely and effectively.

The structure of this plan supports overall operations and the individual competence of ESS responders.



Section 3 – Foundations of the Plan

3.1 Emergency Requirements

Our population

According to the 2025 census results, the population of Lethbridge is 113,671.

- 17% of the population is under the age of 14
- 15% of the population is between the ages of 15 and 24
- 15% of the population is between the ages of 25 and 34
- 13% of the population is between the ages of 35 and 44
- 11% of the population is between the ages of 45 and 54
- 12% of the population is between the ages of 55 and 64
- 16% of population is 65 years and older

Lethbridge has 23 elementary schools, six middle schools, six high schools and three post-secondary institutions.

Area	Population
North Lethbridge	27%
South Lethbridge	32%
West Lethbridge	41%

3.2 Key Assumptions

Residents

Residents are assumed to have an emergency kit prepared for the needs of their household if an evacuation is needed. Residents are also assumed to be prepared to shelter in place with little or no assistance from municipalities as first responders stabilize an incident and prioritize life safety and vulnerable populations. Residents may be required to shelter in place until normal infrastructure systems are accessible, and individuals are able to evacuate their homes. Mass public notifications will occur in the event individuals are asked to shelter in place or evacuate. During a shelter in place order, when individuals cannot provide for themselves, they are urged to seek assistance from friends, relatives or neighbors before seeking help from the municipality.

Alberta Health Services (AHS)

All facilities coordinated or managed through AHS South Zone have emergency plans. AHS will shelter patients within their care facilities or evacuate patients to designated back-up facilities as they deem appropriate.

School Divisions

All school divisions have emergency plans in place to care for their student populations. Communication will be clear and open during an emergency.

Supported Living Facilities

Supported Living Facilities, including seniors lodging and care for dependent adults, are required to have and maintain their own emergency response plans. Those that do not have the staff and resources to evacuate their own residents are expected to develop and maintain their own mutual aid and agreements to support a response.

Internal Resources

LEMA has facilities and equipment (such as heavy machinery, public transportation and communication equipment) which can be used during an emergency to maintain operations and assist the community.

External Resources

LEMA is part of the Southern Alberta Emergency Management Resource Sharing Agreement. This agreement provides for access to support and resources from other municipalities within the region. LEMA also maintains relationships and agreements with various community partners to assist with ESS efforts, when called upon.

Other Sources of Support for Evacuees

ESS is not the only source of assistance. Evacuees can also have their needs met by:

- Personal financial resources
- Insurance
- Other government agencies
- Non-government organizations
- Community and faith-based organizations
- Family/friends
- Other:
 - Income support may be available to help individuals and families pay for basic expenses like food, clothing and shelter.

Alberta Supports Contact Centre

To connect with the main Alberta Supports Contact Centre:

Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. (open Monday to Friday, closed statutory holidays)

Toll free: [1-877-644-9992](tel:1-877-644-9992)

Email: css.ascc@gov.ab.ca

24-hour Emergency Income Support Contact Centre

Get [emergency financial assistance](#) to help with basic needs like shelter, food, clothing and transportation.

Hours: 24/7

Toll free: [1-866-644-5135](tel:1-866-644-5135)

Fax: 780-422-9681

Email: css.iscc@gov.ab.ca

- Employment Insurance
 - Evacuees can apply for employment insurance. Visit Service Canada for more information.
- Evacuation payments may be offered by the Government of Alberta. Generally, such support is provided as a one-time payment at the sole discretion of the Government of Alberta.

Evacuees should be encouraged to access other supports as appropriate.

Needs of Evacuees

Incidents will be assessed to determine service requirements prior to the commencement of the corresponding services.

Services for evacuees are based on a needs assessment and the corresponding ESS response level outlined in *Section 5: Structure and Services*.

Guiding Principles for Providing Support Using Public Funds

When assisting individuals impacted by an emergency, it is essential to balance their needs with responsible use of public funds. To guide decision-making, the Three E's framework will be applied:

- **Efficiency** – Choosing the simplest and quickest method to meet needs.
- **Economy** – Ensuring due diligence by selecting the most cost-effective way to allocate public resources.
- **Effectiveness** – Prioritizing the best approach to safeguard the health and safety of those affected.

By using this framework, support services can be delivered responsibly while maximizing impact.

Disaster Recovery Funding

The Hazard Assistance and Resilience Program (HARP) in Alberta provides financial assistance to individuals, not-for-profit organizations, and business cooperatives for uninsurable property damage and loss resulting from emergencies and disasters. Its primary goal is to help Albertans regain financial stability after experiencing significant losses.

The Alberta Disaster Assistance Guidelines ensure fair, consistent, and transparent financial support for public sector applicants facing uninsurable disaster-related damages. These guidelines apply to local authorities, provincial government ministries, agencies, boards, and commissions.

HARP does not cover costs, damage, or losses that could have been insured. Before individuals can apply for assistance, a local authority must first apply to the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) for a HARP and receive approval. The HARP operates as a conditional grant, offering financial assistance to local governments, ministry departments, and private-sector applicants to aid in disaster recovery. It follows a cost-sharing model, where the Alberta government covers 90% of eligible disaster costs, while the impacted community and applicants are responsible for the remaining 10%.

To maximize the financial return through the HARP, all expenses and hours related to Emergency Social Services (ESS) response must be thoroughly documented and tracked, regardless of the community being assisted. For a detailed step-by-step application guide, visit [Hazard Assistance and Resilience Program | Alberta.ca](https://www.alberta.ca/hazard-assistance-and-resilience-program).

Ongoing Assessment of Needs and Ability to Provide Services

It is impossible to predict all evacuee needs. Initial assessments provide a starting point, but ongoing evaluations are essential as evacuees register, and firsthand knowledge is gained by responders.

The ESS Section Chief(s) must continuously evaluate their ability to meet service demands, including forecasting needs and available resources. If local resources are expected to fall short, this should be recognized as early as possible so additional support can be secured without delay. Requests for additional assistance should be made by the ESS Reception Centre Manager or Facility Manager to the ESS Operations Section Chief, who will then consult with the ESS Incident Commander or Director of Emergency Management (DEM) or designate to develop an appropriate plan. Assistance may come from internal staff or external sources, such as neighboring communities, the Province, or the Government of Canada.

We will provide briefings, shadowing opportunities, and support from current ESS responders to ensure a smooth transition and effective integration of new personnel.

Evacuee Rights and Responsibilities

We shall promote a safe, respectful, and dignified environment for all individuals who have been evacuated during a crisis. It is essential that everyone, both evacuees and those assisting them, work together to uphold these principles and guidelines.

The rights and responsibilities identified below serve to ensure the dignity, safety, and well-being of all affected people, while promoting a harmonious and respectful environment in temporary housing facilities and communities.

Rights of Evacuated Individuals

- **Safety and Security:** Evacuated individuals have the right to personal safety and security during their stay in temporary housing facilities.
- **Basic Needs:** Evacuated individuals have the right to access necessities, including food, water, and shelter.
- **Privacy:** Evacuated individuals have the right to privacy and personal space to the extent possible in temporary housing conditions.
- **Information:** Evacuated individuals have the right to information about the crisis, available services, and the duration of their stay.
- **Dignity and Respect:** Evacuated individuals have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Responsibilities of Evacuated Individuals

1. **Conduct:** Individuals are responsible for conducting themselves in a manner that is respectful, and responsible. This includes:
 - a. Respecting the rights and privacy of other evacuees.
 - b. Avoiding any form of discrimination, harassment, or violence.
 - c. Complying with the rules and regulations of the temporary housing facility and the host community.
2. **Community Engagement:** Individuals are encouraged to participate positively in the temporary community by:
 - a. Assisting in communal activities when possible.
 - b. Maintaining cleanliness and order in living spaces.
 - c. Cooperating with facility staff and volunteers.
3. **Adherence to Rules and Regulations:** Individuals must adhere to all rules and regulations set by the temporary housing facility and the local authorities. This includes:
 - a. Following safety protocols and emergency procedures.
 - b. Respecting property and not causing damage.
 - c. Complying with any legal obligations and instructions from the authorities.
4. **Implementation and Enforcement:** The temporary housing facility will implement and enforce guidelines that respect the rights of evacuees.
 - a. Any breach of responsibility by evacuees may result in appropriate actions taken in a manner that respects the individual's rights and dignity.
 - b. Evacuees are encouraged to report any violation of their rights.

Managing Expectations

Key messaging should be determined and communicated early in the ESS service delivery to help manage expectations. Key messaging should indicate:

- Hours of operation – in the initial crisis, service may be available for prolonged hours. After that phase has passed, evacuees can access services during the established hours of operation.
- That ESS provides basic emergency needs for a limited time.
- Specific services that are being provided so that all staff/volunteers and evacuees have consistent information.

3.3 Communication Protocols

External Communications

To ensure accurate, secure, and consistent communication during an emergency, all media inquiries must be directed to the ESS Liaison Officer or ESS Incident Commander. Responders and volunteers are not authorized to speak to media representatives; this prevents the spread of unverified or conflicting information. The ESS Information Officer will provide official event status updates, and only this verified information is to be used when responding to evacuee questions or public inquiries.

Additionally, the privacy and security of evacuees are of utmost importance. Information regarding any evacuee's registration, status, or location, is confidential and may only be shared with appropriate authorization from the evacuee.

By following these communication protocols, responders and volunteers help ensure consistency in messaging, maintain public trust, and uphold the privacy and dignity of those affected by the emergency.

Internal Communications

During all activations, ESS follows the Incident Command System (ICS) to ensure effective coordination and communication. As part of this structure - formal, documented communication is required in specific circumstances, including when:

- Receiving or issuing work assignments
- Requesting support or additional resources
- Reporting the progress of assigned tasks

The requirement for formal communication in these instances is intended to maintain clarity, accountability, and operational efficiency. However, it is not meant to restrict the flow of critical information during an event. In all other situations, responders are encouraged to use informal communication to share incident or event-related information as needed to support collaboration and situational awareness.

By adhering to these communication protocols, responders can ensure that essential operational details are properly documented while still allowing for the timely exchange of information necessary for effective response efforts.

Section 4 - Activation and Deactivation of the Plan

4.1 Activation

A thorough situational assessment during an event is essential for ensuring a timely and effective ESS response. This plan provides guidance for responders on assessment, activation, deactivation, and demobilization, while also supporting decisions on the appropriate level of response based on the specific circumstances. Deploying too many resources can create confusion and drive-up costs, while insufficient resources may leave evacuee needs unmet, hinder documentation, and create safety risks for both evacuees and responders.

The following section outlines ESS response options tailored to the scale and scope of an emergency. It offers direction on decision making, escalation, and the identification of services and resources that should be activated. This structured approach helps keep the ESS response balanced, effective, and adaptable to the evolving needs of each situation.

Based on the size and nature of the incident, only specific sections of the ESS organizational structure may need to be activated.

Authority and Transfer of Command

Incident	Authority
State of Local Emergency (SOLE)	Director of Emergency Management (DEM) or Deputy Director of Emergency Management (DDEM)
Non-Sole	City Manager or Designate

If a State of Local Emergency (SOLE) is declared, authorization for ESS activation must come from the Director of Emergency Management (DEM), or their Designate.

When a SOLE is not declared, or when a request is received to support an impacted community beyond Lethbridge, activation must be authorized by the City Manager or designate.

If ESS personnel identify factors that suggest a potential need for additional response, these must be communicated to the appropriate authority, prior to initiating any actions. The DEM or City Manager or their designates retain authority to escalate or further activate a response.

Due to the complexities of each individual response, a transfer of command may occur, during which an ESS representative may serve as the ESS Incident Commander. In such cases, the DEM or City Manager or designate must receive frequent and up-to-date communication to remain apprised of the evolving situation. For an Inter-municipal response, (see page 21 for definition) authority over the evacuees from Lethbridge transfers to the DEM of the accepting municipality. In these instances, roles, responsibilities, and expectations must be clearly defined through an agreement or delegation of authority, both of which must be processed through the Lethbridge Emergency Management Agency (LEMA) DEM.

Request for Activation of the ESS Plan

Requests must meet established criteria and follow the approved process before a response can be initiated. External requests for activation may take place when conditions exceed the capacity of service providers to sustain essential life safety services. The response guideline should be used in guiding the scope and scale of ESS response and would require an evacuee support agreement to be signed.

How to Activate an ESS Response

Activation of ESS personnel and services must be authorized and directed by a DEM, City Manager or their Designates.

Authorization for activation can be gained by contacting the LFES Chief on Call directly, by contacting the Public Safety Communication Centre (PSCC) at 911 or the police non-emergency contact line at 403-328-4444, or to the ESS Program Administrator, dependent upon the urgency of activation.

Eligibility for ESS Services

Supports for small or personal disasters are available through the Canadian Red Cross Personal Disaster Assistance Program. Services are provided for up to 25 people for a personal disaster such as a house fire.

These services can be accessed by calling the Canadian Red Cross 24/7 emergency line at 1-888-800-6493.

If activated, ESS services may be provided for residents:

- within the City of Lethbridge.
- from other municipalities if requested and approved by the City Manager or designate under a mutual aid agreement.
- visitors
 - Long-term visitors such as students or individuals working in the area will be provided with support.
 - Short-term visitors to the evacuated area will be asked to return to their homes. If evacuation routes are not open, support may be provided.

4.2 Deactivation

The following steps are required to deactivate the plan.

1. Approval to deactivate

- The authorized personnel (DEM or designate if SOLE or City Manager or designate if non-SOLE) communicate the deactivation of the plan to all parties involved.

- The ESS Incident Commander will communicate the deactivation of the Plan to the ESS Section Chiefs.

2. Notify Stakeholders

- Communicate the deactivation decision to:
 - Response teams and staff
 - Evacuees, residents, or affected individuals
 - Partner agencies and service providers
 - Government authorities and other key stakeholders

3. Demobilize resources

- Release personnel, volunteers, contractors, and equipment that are no longer required
- Complete resource tracking and documentation
- Provide a report for the ESS Incident Commander

4. Document actions and decisions

- Finalize incident logs, reports, expenditures, and resource records.
- Ensure records are securely maintained according to organizational policies.

4.3 Post-Deactivation

Each ESS Section Chief is responsible for ensuring that all documentation and records are gathered and submitted to the ESS Documentation Unit Leader for consolidation and review.

Following deactivation, the ESS Incident Commander will conduct an activation debrief with responders as soon as it is reasonably practicable. This debrief provides an opportunity to review response activities, identify successes and challenges, and capture lessons learned to strengthen future ESS operations.

Section 5 – Structure and Services

5.1 Response Lead and Financial Responsibility

Situation	Response	Example	Response Lead	Financially Responsible
Small-scale, insurable event (less than 10 residences or 25 residents)	Per LFES Standard Operating Procedures - LFES would contact Victim Services who may call in Canadian Red Cross. LFES would arrange for a bus to provide a warm place for evacuees while crews work giving Victim Services and/or Canadian Red Cross time to arrange for support. The COL ESS is not typically activated in response to a personal disaster; however, may be asked to support an incident which could include opening a reception centre and providing light refreshments and assisting displaced individuals in contacting insurance providers, family members, etc.	Fire in an 8-plex displacing 15 residents	Canadian Red Cross Society	Canadian Red Cross Society City would not cover any personal costs (accommodation, food, clothing, etc)
Larger-scale, insurable event (greater than 10 residences or 25 residents)	LFES would contact COL ESS who could open a reception centre and assess support needs. LFES would arrange for a bus to provide a warm place for evacuees while crew's work. COL ESS team would assist displaced individuals in contacting insurance providers, family members, etc., to arrange accommodation. Transportation to reception centre, from reception to accommodation, may be provided to residents.	Fire displacing 60 units/100 residents in an apartment building	City of Lethbridge ESS	Residents, insurance, or condo board. If a private owner requested assistance from the City, an agreement should be in place prior to any costs being incurred. City would not cover any personal costs (accommodation, food, clothing, etc). COL ESS would cover costs of operating the reception centre and light refreshments.
Event in another Alberta community (any size, insurable or not)	Supporting Response COL ESS would activate based on the size of the event. Reception centre, accommodation, food, etc. Outside municipality would enter into an Agreement for services Per diems, and other costs would all be agreed to within the Agreement	Any event that overwhelms another Alberta municipality	City of Lethbridge ESS	Impacted municipality (100%) (via agreement with City of Lethbridge) COL would incur costs and invoice Alberta Municipality
Event in another province (any size, insurable or not)	Supporting Response (Out-of-Province) COL ESS would activate based on the size of the event. Reception centre, accommodation, food, etc. Province (100%) (agreement between impacted province and Government of Alberta (GoA) and GoA and the City)	Any event that overwhelms a municipality outside Alberta	City of Lethbridge ESS	Agreement must be in place before activation COL would incur costs and invoice Government of Alberta
Large, uninsurable event (costs exceed \$250,000)	Grant-Funded Response - State of Local Emergency would be declared COL would respond and claim expenses through HARP program	Wildfire displacing hundreds of residents	City of Lethbridge ESS	City of Lethbridge would claim through Hazard Assistance and Resilience Program (HARP)

5.2 Non-Disaster Activation

Organizations and service providers within the community are expected to maintain emergency plans for their operations. An internal emergency affecting a single organization does not automatically constitute a municipal emergency. However, if an organization becomes overwhelmed due to an extreme event or multiple incidents, Emergency Social Services (ESS) may be activated to provide support.

ESS resources may be requested to support unsafe situations, such as gas leaks or utility failures, that require evacuation but do not meet the threshold of a municipal emergency. In these cases, the request for assistance should follow the non-sole procedure.

Support will align with standard ESS response protocols and will require a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be signed by both parties. The MOU will outline cost recovery arrangements and specify the services to be provided.

The City of Lethbridge delegated authority will oversee the response, remaining actively involved in determining the need for continued support. The requesting organization will retain responsibility for delivering its regular services to clients.

5.3 ESS Integration Within the Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC)

The integration of ESS within the ECC requires careful consideration due to the distinct risk profiles and operational priorities of each function. The ECC is primarily focused on managing physical threats - such as wildfires, floods, or pandemics - through tactical response and hazard mitigation. In contrast, ESS is dedicated to addressing the needs of individuals affected by these emergencies, including shelter, and basic necessities.

ESS and the ECC can be activated independently or together, depending on the nature of the incident. Each situation requires a thorough assessment to determine which functions are needed and to what extent.

Scenario 1:

A wildfire is approaching the city; the community of Paradise Canyon is under mandatory evacuation as a precaution while crews fight the fire. The residents will be evacuated to a Reception Centre until it is safe for them to return home.

In this scenario, both ESS and ECC operations may be fully activated, and a fully integrated ICS structure will be utilized.

Scenario 2:

A large wildfire is advancing toward the city, prompting a mandatory evacuation of the entire West Side. Firefighting efforts are expected to continue for more than eight hours. With schools in session and local hotels fully booked, evacuees will be relocated to a neighboring municipality until it is safe to return.

In this scenario, both ESS and ECC operations are activated. However, there is no requirement for a physical ESS presence - such as a registration or reception centre. The ESS response will be primarily administrative, with the focus on coordination and planning in partnership with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) and the receiving municipality to prepare for the arrival of evacuees.

ESS serves as the primary liaison with the receiving jurisdiction and provincial ESS leads, and takes the lead on managing ESS-related agreements, memorandum of understanding (MOUs), and contracts.

Scenario 3:

A wildfire is approaching the Village of Warner which is under mandatory evacuation while crews fight the fire. There is no threat to the City of Lethbridge. The residents of Warner will be evacuated to a reception centre until it is safe for them to return home.

In this scenario an ESS response is necessary. All response activities are carried out within the City of Lethbridge to support evacuees from the affected municipality. The ESS would activate solely to support individuals displaced from their homes, with response efforts potentially including accommodation and food.

5.4 ESS Response Levels

Once an ESS response has been activated by the delegated authority, response measures will be determined by the number of affected individuals.

The matrix below categorizes types of responses, based upon the number of people displaced, the estimated duration of their displacement. Standard responses can be escalated based on other factors present at the time of response.

Example

There are westbound collisions on both Whoop-Up Drive, and the Highway 3 bridge that are impeding traffic getting to west Lethbridge, and approximately 150 residents are stranded. The

collisions are expected to be cleared within 6 hours. The standard response for this would be a heightened awareness scenario for potential activation upon escalation (R1).

However, this same scenario at -40 degrees might necessitate an R3 response which would activate a location where motorists can stay warm while the road is cleared.

Time Displaced X Residences Impacted	Under 6 Hours		8-24 Hours		24-72 Hours		72+ Hours			
	Standard	Escalated	Standard	Escalated	Standard	Escalated	Standard	Escalated		
0-25 Residents	R2		R2		R2		R2			
26-499 Residents	R1	R3	R4	R5	R4	R5	R4	R5		
<500 Residents	R1	R3	R3		R4	R5	R6	R4	R5	R6
R1	Elevated Awareness and Standby for Activation									
R2	Support to residents to access services through their insurance and/or the Canadian Red Cross Society									
R3	Establishment of a temporary comfort shelter. Warming/cooling/temporary shelter, with no sleeping accommodation.									
R4	Coordination of displaced person(s) into hotel accommodation									
R5	Establishment of Congregate Lodging, including sleeping accommodation									
R6	Inter-municipal response coordinating accommodation with another community									

R1 - Elevated Awareness and Standby for Activation

Scope and Scale of Impact

Any number of displaced residents who are anticipated to be returned to their residence within 8 hours.

ESS Response

Administrative in nature and would focus on situational awareness, analysis of intel for the purpose of pre-planning for potential escalation and exploration of any additional contingencies that are present during the event.

Tasks

1. Establish situational awareness.
2. Identify the potential for further activation and establish the required resources, should they be needed which may include:
 - Alerting ESS responders to the potential for response.
 - Alerting relevant MOU responders to the potential for activation of the MOU and identify capacity for services available, if applicable.

The tasks required will vary depending on the circumstances of the situation. This list is not comprehensive. Some tasks may not apply in every activation, while others may need to be added as conditions evolve.

Additional Considerations, Plans, and/or Partners

Should the circumstances leave individuals stranded for the original anticipated 8 hours, an escalated response may be required. This would be at the discretion of the DEM.

R2 – Personal Disaster (External Agency Support)

Scope and Scale of Impact

Supporting impacted residents by directing them to other resources who specialize in personal disaster response, ie. Personal insurance, the Canadian Red Cross Society, the Salvation Army, etc.

ESS Response

Will provide support in the form of education and guidance to help affected residents connect with the Canadian Red Cross Society or other supports as required.

Tasks

1. Contact the Canadian Red Cross Society.

The tasks required will vary depending on the situation. This list is not comprehensive - some tasks may not apply in every activation, while others may need to be added as conditions evolve.

Additional Considerations, Plans, and/or Partners

Displaced residents would be referred to the following chain of contacts for support:

- Personal Insurance
- Canadian Red Cross Society

R3 - Comfort/Reception Centre

Scope and Scale of Impact

The Comfort/Reception Centre provides a safe location for displaced persons to receive immediate emergency supports. The centre's scope may include light registration, temporary shelter without sleeping accommodations, and the provision of light refreshments. The centre may be activated for any event requiring a safe gathering point for evacuees, with potential escalation to an R4 response if needed.

ESS Response

ESS responders would deploy to the comfort/reception centre and would report to their respective ESS Section Chief.

Tasks

1. Initial Activation
2. Facility Preparation
3. Staffing & Operations
4. Public Communication & Outreach
5. Ongoing Management & Closure

Tasks required will vary depending on the situation. This list is not comprehensive - some tasks may not apply in every activation, while others may need to be added as conditions evolve.

Additional Considerations, Plans, and/or Partners

- See *MOUs and Agreements appendix* for locations and services that could be activated to support the required services required.
- ESS Comfort/Reception Centre Checklist.
- Companion animal care plan may be required dependent on circumstances.

R4 – Individual Lodging

Scope and Scale of Impact

Support in placing displaced persons into accommodation. Examples include hotels, motels, post-secondary dorms, etc.

If R5 response is also activated, R4 response may still be maintained in smaller venues with priority access being provided for specific individuals who require specialized needs. i.e. companion animal accompaniment, evacuees safety risk, or personal considerations that might make congregate lodging uncomfortable or unsafe for them.

ESS Response

ESS will register displaced people and provide options for support.

Tasks

1. All Comfort/Reception Centre tasks with the addition of activating MOUs associated with lodging.
2. Develop an information sheet for evacuees detailing hotel policies and covered expenses.
3. Assigning evacuees to hotels.
4. Designate and direct evacuees to hotels.
5. Inform hotel(s) of the assigned evacuees.
6. Provide on-site hotel liaison support to answer questions and assist evacuees with registration, food options, and other services.

The tasks required will vary depending on the situation. This list is not comprehensive - some tasks may not apply in every activation, while others may need to be added as conditions evolve.

Additional Considerations, Plans, and/or Partners

- ESS Registration
- ESS Individual Lodging checklist would be used to guide this response
- Wellness Assistance Resilience Mobility (WARM) team for support of vulnerable evacuees

R5 - Congregate Lodging

Scope and Scale of Impact

This response is an expansion of R3 response, in which shelter and care accommodations are provided communally.

ESS Response

ESS responders will be set up in congregate lodging facility and will report to the ESS Operations Section Chief on site.

Tasks

1. All Congregate Lodging steps with the addition of activating MOUs associated with lodging.

The tasks required will vary depending on the situation. This list is not comprehensive - some tasks may not apply in every activation, while others may need to be added as conditions evolve.

Additional Considerations, Plans, and/or Partners

- Registration
- Individual Lodging checklist would be used to guide this response
- Registration Centre Activation Checklist
- WARM for support of evacuees who are vulnerable in nature
- See *MOUs and Agreements appendix* for locations and services that could be activated to support the required services required
- Companion animal care plan may be required

R6 - Inter-Municipal

Scope and Scale of Impact

When the circumstances pose a threat to the safety of the community, or the required response overwhelms the local ESS capacity and resources, inter-municipal evacuation may be required.

ESS Response

ESS response will be administrative.

There will be high volumes of coaching calls from residents and facilities to support them in getting what they need to evacuate the community.

Tasks

1. Contact the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) through the Field Officer, at the direction of the DEM or designate.
2. Begin preparations for an agreement with a receiving municipality if a preexisting agreement is not already in place. Ensure consultation with Legal Services occurs. Consider the following:
 - Compensation for services rendered
 - Payment structure
 - Eligibility for Hazard Assistance and Resilience Program (HARP)
 - Scope and Scale of Services Rendered
 - Expectations for ongoing communication
3. Pre-evacuation registration.
4. Preparations for transportation to the receiving community.

The tasks required will vary depending on the situation. This list is not comprehensive - some tasks may not apply in every activation, while others may need to be added as conditions evolve.

Additional Considerations, Plans, and/or Partners

Just-in-Time MOU with external municipality identifying what services and documentation will be provided and outlining strategy to return vulnerable evacuees to their community.

Consideration must be given to establishing a potential call centre for more complex calls to be supported by ESS team members.

5.5 Demobilization

This procedure outlines the process for the safe, efficient, and effective demobilization of ESS, ensuring all resources are accounted for, returned, or reassigned appropriately.

Prerequisites for Demobilization

Before initiating demobilization, the following conditions must be met:

- The incident is transitioning to recovery, and ESS is no longer required.
- All stakeholders and partners have been notified of the impending demobilization.
- Remaining operational needs have been transferred to recovery agencies or other appropriate entities.
- Documentation, including forms, records, and logs, is up to date.

Post Activation Review and Debrief

A Post Activation Review and Debrief is a structured evaluation completed by the ESS Incident Commander, conducted after an emergency response has concluded. Its primary goals are to assess the effectiveness of the response, identify lessons learned, and develop actionable recommendations for improving future preparedness and operations. Key components typically include:

Purpose

- To analyze the overall performance of the emergency response.
- To document successes and areas for improvement.
- To ensure compliance with policies and procedures.
- To foster continuous improvement in emergency planning and response.

Preparation

- Gather reports, logs, and feedback from responders, stakeholders, and affected parties.
- Schedule a debrief session with all relevant participants, ensuring diverse representation (e.g., emergency management personnel, ESS responders, partner agencies, and community representatives).

Components of the Review

- Summarize the event, including its timeline, scope, and major challenges.
- Evaluate whether the response objectives were met and identify factors that facilitated or hindered success.
- Assess the adequacy and efficiency of resources deployed (personnel, equipment, facilities, etc.).
- Examine how well agencies and teams collaborated and communicated internally and externally.
- Review the effectiveness of leadership and decision making during the response.

- Evaluate how the response addressed the needs of affected populations, including vulnerable groups.

Debriefing Process

- Encourage open dialogue in a safe, non-judgmental environment to share experiences, challenges, and successes.
- Document participant insights, including what worked well, what did not, and suggested improvements.
- Recognize the contributions of individuals and teams.

Outcome and Follow-Up

- Develop a list of practical recommendations to address identified gaps or challenges.
- Create a detailed report summarizing the review findings, lessons learned, and proposed actions.
- Assign responsibilities, set timelines, and monitor the progress of corrective actions.

Continuous Improvement

- Use the findings to update emergency response plans, training programs, and standard operating procedures (SOPs).
- Share insights with relevant stakeholders to strengthen overall preparedness and resilience.

By conducting a thorough post-activation review and debrief, organizations can ensure a more effective and coordinated response to future emergencies.

Section 6 - Operational Plans

6.1 Level of Service and Cost Guidelines

This section outlines the services offered as part of an ESS response, including the standards and limitations of service. It details the services that may be provided depending on the availability of staff and resources. Additionally, it identifies services provided by other local, provincial, or non-governmental organizations (NGO) and includes examples of services not offered by ESS.

Cost Guidelines

The rates will be outlined in the completed Evacuee Support Agreement for the services requested at time of need. Depending on the situation, the City may contact Provincial Emergency Social Services or the community that was evacuated to determine if other rates may be covered.

Services are provided on an as-needed basis. Approved service levels and assessments of individual/family need by ESS staff will determine who qualifies for what services. This in no way represents financial payment or guarantee of services to evacuees.

Managing Expectations

Key messaging should be determined and communicated early in the ESS service delivery to help manage expectations. Key messaging should indicate:

- Hours of operation – in the initial crisis of evacuation, service may be available for prolonged hours. After that phase has passed, evacuees can access services during the established hours of operation.
- That ESS provides basic emergency needs for a limited time.
- Specific services are being provided so that all staff/volunteers and evacuees have consistent information.

Standard Schedule of Services

Basic Essential Needs	
Services that provide for the survival, health and safety of evacuees	
Service	Standard
Registration	Registration & Reception Centre Program (RRCP) Paper Forms
Inquiry/Family Reunification	Subject to Protection of Privacy Act (POPA) restrictions and information security
Lodging - Individual	Basic hotel/motel/dorm room <i>Basic room rate & applicable taxes only</i>
Lodging - Congregate	Cots in an approved community facility. Layout and numbers will be approved by AHS and Chief Fire Marshal.
Food Services	Buffet or delivered meals. Complimentary breakfast at hotel where available.
Clothing	Basic covering for environment or modesty Provisions for delivery in MOU's
Health and hygiene supplies	Hygiene/toiletry kits - Canadian Red Cross Society as first option. Province has provisions.
Laundry	Commercial laundromat or laundry facility
Transportation – Accessibility Needs	Access-a-ride or Taxi
Transportation – to lodging facility	City Transit/ Charter Bus/ Taxi
First Aid	Basic first aid. Preferred delivery via MOU
Other Health	Assistance with sourcing/referral
* Note: Persons with complex needs may require services beyond the scope of Emergency Social Services.	

Discretionary Services (If approved by agreement and staff and resources are available)	
Services that may be provided if resources are available and must be authorized by the LEMA DEM	
Service	Standard
Children's activity area at the reception centre	If supplies are available
Companion animal lodging and care	Housed with owner if possible or cage/kennel at available facilities if available

Services Provided by External Agencies	
Services that are within the mandate of provincial departments or the mission of other community agencies or groups.	
Service	Standard
Emotional Support	AHS Mental Health / Addictions or other Agencies

Functional Needs	Other Community Agencies
Unaccompanied Children	Alberta Supports
Unaccompanied Dependent Adults	Other Community Agencies
Language Translation	Other Community Agencies
Security	Private firms

Services Not Provided

Services not specifically mentioned in any of the above categories are not provided and should be considered the responsibility of evacuees at their own expense. This includes, but is not limited to, the following examples:

- Expenses of evacuees not registered at a reception centre
- Cost of hotel rooms booked by evacuee on a pre-paid hotel booking website
- Hotel transfers to different facility or communities.
- Re-housing if evicted from assigned hotel
- Supports for individuals assigned to a different community or reception centre
- Childcare
- Taxi fare not authorized by reception centre
- Dining out (not provided by the reception centre)
- Shopping for clothes and other items
- Accommodation not arranged/assigned by the reception centre
- Damage to hotel rooms
- Room service or movie charges to the hotel room
- Expense reimbursement

Hosting External Communities

The City of Lethbridge is a logical choice to provide support to evacuees in the South Zone. Services for external communities will align with the schedule outlined above. Hosting an external community involves responding to emergencies that are not our own, therefore this will be treated as a Fee-for-Service arrangement and will be subject to the following conditions:

1. Any request to accept evacuees must be accompanied by a written Mutual Aid Request and a signed Delegation of Authority from the responsible jurisdiction of the evacuated community.
2. All costs of the ESS response and services provided will be invoiced directly to the jurisdiction responsible or to the Government of Alberta, and payment will not be dependent on the responsible jurisdictions' receipt Hazard Assistance and Resilience Program (HARP) funding.
3. The City of Lethbridge will not be required to submit a HARP application to recover costs.
4. Rates for hotel rooms and meal costs will be at the standard rate charged by the facility and typical of rates charged by the hotel or restaurant/caterer.

5. Staff time will be charged at the rates paid to staff members, including regular time and overtime.
6. The jurisdiction responsible will provide a representative with decision-making authority to be the primary contact between the City of Lethbridge and the jurisdiction responsible for the purpose of clarifying expectations and authorizations.
7. Provision of initial support for evacuees will be for up to 7 days. This will give the impacted jurisdiction time to enter into an agreement with the City of Lethbridge for longer provision of services.
8. The City of Lethbridge will not be required to absorb costs for assisting an external jurisdiction.

Payment for Services

The Requesting Party shall pay the City for the services within thirty (30) days of receipt of an invoice for the services, regardless of whether the Requesting Party is awaiting reimbursement or financial assistance from the Government of Alberta, the Government of Canada, or any other entity.

6.2 Supply Cache and Donation Management

Supply Cache Management

Maintaining access to essential resources is crucial for timely deployment of an ESS response. However, establishing a comprehensive supply cache often poses challenges due to high costs, expiration concerns, and storage limitations. To address this, the City of Lethbridge maintains a modest supply cache complemented by several agreements and MOUs, ensuring that necessary resources are readily accessible when needed.

If more resources are needed, the City can request additional supplies from partner agencies and communities throughout the province. These supplies are managed and shared through mutual aid agreements and Memorandums of Understanding.

Donation Management

During times of disaster, the public's desire to help those affected is strong and widespread. One of the easiest and most impactful ways to help is through donations. However, receiving donations can present significant logistical challenges, from receiving and storing to securing, sorting, transporting, tracking, and distributing the items.

Physical Donations

Evacuees will have access to essential items through MOUs with local service providers and thrift centres. These partnerships enable a streamlined and efficient process for evacuees to access essential goods.

Ensuring the health and safety of evacuees and responders remains the highest priority for any response. Those who wish to contribute physical goods will be encouraged to donate through local entities that are equipped to accept and manage these items.

Donation Communications

All communication regarding donations must be coordinated through the ESS Information Officer via the ESS Liaison Officer and/or through Corporate Communications with the City of Lethbridge. Requests for communication should be directed at the ESS Reception Centre Manager or the appropriate ESS Section Chief.

Receiving, Sorting and Distributing Donations

If a situation arises where unsolicited goods are being delivered to support response efforts, local thrift stores may be interested in accepting used items. Engaging these organizations early can be helpful, but if this is not possible, storing the goods until they can be addressed will be required.

Monetary (Cash) Donations

The City of Lethbridge will not directly accept or solicit cash donations at any time during response to a disaster or emergency event. Individuals who wish to contribute to relief efforts are encouraged to donate directly to a reputable charity of their choosing. It is important to ensure that donations are made to established and trustworthy organizations. The City of Lethbridge does not endorse or provide direction or preference toward any specific agency or charitable organization.

In-Kind Services

In-kind donations are a popular way for businesses or individuals with specific skills or equipment to support emergency response efforts. These donations may include services that evacuees can access while staying in the host community or assistance that supports recovery after the emergency. ESS will provide evacuees with information on available in-kind services, allowing them to contact the donors directly if interested.

It is important to note that in-kind services are offered voluntarily, and donors will not be compensated unless otherwise specified before the response phase. ESS and its partners do not endorse any services or products provided through in-kind donations.

6.3 Companion Animal Response

Ensuring safe and effective support for animals during evacuations is an important component of the ESS response. While every effort is made to keep animals with their owners, this is not always feasible due to factors such as hotel availability and facility limitations. Public health regulations prohibit companion animals from congregate lodging settings, with the exception of registered service dogs, which must be identifiable through appropriate documentation and a vest. Companion animals may be accommodated at Reception Centres when they can be housed in designated areas and do not pose challenges for individuals with allergen sensitivities.

To maintain a consistent and safe level of service, volunteers should have completed the associated competency training for animal response. Those who haven't must operate under the direct supervision of a trained and competent individual.

ESS Responsibilities

ESS maintains several agreements and partnerships to support safe and effective animal care during evacuations. When co-location cannot be achieved, the ESS Specialized Services Branch Director will activate established MOUs with boarding kennels and other animal care providers to ensure appropriate sheltering options are available. Availability and placement details are then communicated to evacuees at the Reception Centre.

ESS also works closely with the municipal Animal Services Team, which may be engaged to support specialized needs such as handling animals at large, addressing concerns related to care or safety, or transferring animals to alternate care facilities when required. These partnerships ensure that necessary resources, expertise, and facilities can be accessed quickly, enabling a coordinated and safe approach to animal support throughout an ESS activation.

Owner Responsibilities

Animal owners are responsible for the care and control of their animals while accessing services, and ensuring their animals are properly supervised and cared for. Basic supplies may be provided when available, but owners remain accountable for meeting all animal care needs, including specialized diets.

If an owner cannot provide care, alternate arrangements may be coordinated through Animal Services or partner agencies, with owners responsible for any related decisions or costs. Owners must also manage extensions or fees for animals housed at alternate facilities unless otherwise approved by the appropriate designated authority.

Veterinary care remains the sole responsibility of the owner, with Animal Services assisting only when the owner is unable to coordinate care directly.

Companion Animal Lodging Options in Order of Preference

1. Animal will stay with its owner in pet-friendly accommodation.
2. Animal Services Team or Humane Society facilities.
3. Animal lodges in another regulated care facility.

6.4 Reunification

This plan establishes a safe, privacy-compliant, and efficient process to support the reunification of individuals separated from their loved ones during an emergency or disaster. It applies to minors, dependent adults, and other impacted individuals and is designed to align with the 2025 Alberta Emergency Social Services (ESS) Framework as well as all relevant provincial legislation.

The plan is guided by several principles:

- Aligning with ICS, life and safety of evacuees and displaced persons is the priority - especially for minors and other vulnerable persons.
- Privacy-by-design - including data minimization and secure handling in line with *Alberta.ca* standards.
- Cultural safety and accessibility - using interpreters and low-barrier supports in partnership with *Alberta Health Services*.

- Do no harm - by having the inquirer consent to having their information shared with the individual they are seeking and supporting the mechanism for reunification, should the sought person wish to reunify with the inquirer.

The plan applies to all reunification efforts operated by ESS and is implemented, where applicable, in coordination with AEMA, law enforcement (LPS/RCMP), Alberta Health Services, school authorities, First Nations partners, non-governmental organizations, and neighboring jurisdictions.

After-Action, Records & Continuous Improvement

- Complete an After-Action Review focusing on: match rates, time-to-contact, privacy incidents, special population handling, and partner coordination.
- Retain records per municipal schedules and POPA/ATIA; coordinate with the Privacy Officer on any breach notifications (HIA for custodians; POPA for public bodies)

6.5 Re-entry

When residents return to their community following a disaster, the experience can be emotional and overwhelming. Many individuals face uncertainty about the condition of their homes, their safety, and the steps required to re-establish daily life.

The ESS team will establish a Re-Entry Reception Centre as a central point of contact where individuals and families can receive information and practical assistance. Staff and volunteers will help guide residents through next steps, connect them with available community resources, and ensure that essential needs such as food, shelter, and personal support are met.

By offering reassurance, clear information, and coordinated services, ESS helps residents regain a sense of stability and confidence as they begin the process of re-occupying their homes and rebuilding their routines.

Section 7 - Personnel, Organization and Responsibilities

Organizing the Response

The ESS Incident Commander will direct the ESS response. This would include contacting the necessary ESS Section Chiefs that would be required. The ESS Section Chiefs will contact any additional personnel.

Workloads

ESS personnel are subject to maximum workload guidelines as follows:

- 60 hours per week
- 12 hours per day
- 10 hours between shifts
- 1 day off for every 6 days worked

These guidelines protect personnel from becoming overworked or overwhelmed and ensure optimal performance from the team.

Roles and responsibilities

Each team member has a defined role that is integral to the services the plan provides. This section defines role responsibilities during the activation.

Role	Key Responsibilities
ESS Incident Commander (IC)	Provides overall leadership for the incident response or management of an event. Using the standard priorities of Life Safety, Incident Stabilization and Property/Environmental protection, the IC establishes Incident Objectives. The IC delegates authority to others as the complexity of the incident or event dictates. The IC must be fully briefed and should have a written delegation of authority from the municipality, if absent from day-to-day job descriptions. The IC takes general direction from the Lethbridge Emergency Management Agency and Emergency Advisory Committee.
ESS Safety Officer	Monitors incident operations and advises the Incident Commander on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of emergency responder personnel.
ESS Liaison Officer	Serves as the single point of contact for government agencies, regulatory authorities, and mutual aid partners. They maintain communication, share updates on the incident status, and coordinate messaging with the Incident Commander and Public Information Officer to ensure consistency.
ESS Information Officer	Serves as the conduit for information to internal and external stakeholders. When assigned, there is only one per incident. The IO acts as a central point for information dissemination for all information including public information, media relations and internal information.
ESS Operations Section Chief	Responsible for managing all tactical operations at an incident. The OSC will develop and implement strategy and tactics to accomplish incident objectives set

	by IC. The OSC is normally the person with the greatest technical and tactical expertise in dealing with the problem at hand.
ESS Reception Centre Manager	Responsible for overseeing all functions within the reception centre and maintaining communication with the Incident Command Post. They are supported by the branch directors within the reception centre; however, where a branch has not been activated, the functions of that branch default to the Reception Centre Manager for completion.
ESS Registration Branch Director	Responsible for the initial intake, processing, and documentation of evacuees entering the LEMA ESS program. This includes identifying required service levels, reuniting evacuees with loved ones, and recording both the services provided and the locations of evacuees to ensure accurate tracking and support throughout the response. The Registration Branch Director is supported by the units activated below them, when a unit has not been activated, the functions of that unit will default to the branch director for completion.
ESS Meet & Greet Unit	Serves as the first point of contact for evacuees arriving at an Evacuee Reception Centre (ERC) during a disaster. This role ensures a compassionate, organized, and safe welcome to individuals and families, while initiating the intake process and triaging needs. Meet & Greet Unit Leader reports to the Reception Centre Manager.
ESS Registration and Assessment Unit	Ensures that all evacuees are formally recorded in the Emergency Social Services (ESS) system after initial reception. This process collects essential personal information, verifies identity when possible, and determines immediate needs to ensure appropriate services and supports are provided. Registration also enables accurate tracking, resource planning, and family reunification. Registration and Assessment Unit Leader reports to the Reception Centre Manager.
ESS Processing Unit	Uses the information collected by the Registration Unit to formally input the evacuees into the tracking system, issue a unique event identifier and build the welcome package for the evacuees.
ESS Reunification Unit	Responsible for coordinating and facilitating the safe and timely reunification of evacuees with their families, ensuring accurate tracking, documentation, and communication throughout the process.
ESS Well-Being Branch	Supports evacuees by addressing emotional, mental health, and personal needs, and facilitates referrals to external agencies for specialized services.
ESS Volunteer Branch	Manages and supports volunteers by tracking sign-in/out, issuing identification, and providing information on operational schedules, breaks, and general inquiries.
ESS Planning Section Chief	Responsible for providing planning services for the incident. Under the direction of the PSC, the Planning Section collects situation and resource status information, evaluates it, and processes the information for use in developing action plans. Dissemination of information can be in the form of the Incident Action Plan (IAP), in formal briefings or through map and status board displays.
ESS Situation Unit	Collects, processes, and organizes ongoing situation information; prepares situation summaries; and develops projections and forecasts of future events related to the incident. The Situation Unit also prepares maps and gathers and disseminates information and intelligence for use in the Incident Action Plan (IAP). This Unit may also require the expertise of Technical Specialists.

ESS Documentation Unit	Responsible for the collection and dissemination of all response related documentation. Will gather documentation for incident action plan creation, as well as for auditing and for future cost recovery purposes.
ESS Resource Unit	Responsible for maintaining the status of all assigned tactical resources at an incident. This is achieved by overseeing the check-in and check-out of all resources, maintaining a status keeping system indicating current location and status of all resources, and maintaining a master list of all resources
ESS Demobilization Unit	Oversee unit staff who develop an incident demobilization plan that includes specific instructions for all personnel and other resources to be demobilized
ESS Logistics Section Chief	Responsible for providing all the support needs for the incident, such as ordering resources and providing facilities, transportation, supplies, equipment maintenance and fuel, food service, communications, and medical services for incident personnel.
ESS Finance / Administration Section Chief	Responsible for managing all financial aspects of an incident and for supervising members of the Finance & Administration Section. Holds overall accountability for functions within the Finance/Administration Section. If the units below have not been activated, their functions will default to the Section Chief for completion.
ESS Cost Unit	Oversee unit staff who track costs, analyze cost data, make estimates and recommend cost saving measures
ESS Time Unit	Oversee unit staff who ensure the daily recording of incident personnel and equipment time in accordance with the policies of the relevant agencies.
ESS Compensation Claims Unit	Oversee the claims process for both personal injuries and loss or damage associated with ESS response functions.
ESS Procurement Unit	Oversee the administration of new supplier agreements and the procurement of new supplies and equipment.

Section 8 - Self Care for ESS Responders

Responder Wellness

ESS responders play a vital role in providing comfort, stability, and practical assistance to individuals and families experiencing crisis or displacement. This work can be emotionally demanding, often involving long hours, exposure to distressing situations, and the pressure of making quick, compassionate decisions in uncertain environments. Maintaining wellness is therefore essential to ensuring both personal resilience and the sustained effectiveness of the ESS program.

At the end of each activation, a debrief will be conducted to provide responders an opportunity to reflect on their experiences, share observations, and identify any challenges encountered during the response. Responders are also encouraged to reach out to a program lead at any time for access to additional support and resources available to assist with response-related stress or wellness concerns.

Importance of Wellness in ESS Response

Responder wellness directly affects the ability to deliver high-quality, empathetic care. When responders are physically, mentally, and emotionally supported, they are better able to:

- Manage stress and maintain clear decision-making under pressure
- Engage empathetically with evacuees and colleagues
- Reduce the risk of burnout and compassion fatigue
- Contribute to a positive, supportive team culture

Promoting wellness also helps sustain volunteer retention and builds long-term program strength. ESS recognizes that taking care of responders is an integral part of taking care of the community.

Section 9 - Administration and Oversight

Who owns the plan

The Emergency Social Services Response Plan is owned and maintained by the Risk & Controls Department. This department is responsible for ensuring the plan remains current, effective and aligned with the City’s overall emergency management framework. Risk & Controls provides oversight, coordination, and support to ensure that ESS operations are delivered consistently, that responders are trained and equipped, and that the program continues to meet the needs of residents during emergencies and recovery.

Last updated

The Plan will be reviewed and redistributed annually to ensure accuracy, reflect program updates, and incorporate lessons learned from activations and exercises. Every three years, the plan will undergo a formal re-signing process to reaffirm departmental commitment, validate content, and ensure alignment with the City’s emergency management policies and procedures. This regular review cycle supports continuous improvement and maintains the plan’s relevance and readiness for implementation.

Changes

Date	Summary of Changes
August 12, 2026	New document