SCHEDULE E

Guidelines for Forest Fire



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Purpose

The purpose of this Plan is to develop a Municipal Forest Fire Emergency Plan. This Plan is only a general guide, as the first responders at the forest fire site will have command of the site, unless a higher authority takes command of the site area. Forest fires can pose a significant threat to public safety, health, the environment, property, and the economy. The impact of forest fires may be localized or widespread. The development and implementation of a forest fire plan is voluntary since it exceeds the requirements of the current legislation program. While municipalities currently have emergency response plans that are designed to address all hazards, recommended practices suggest that hazard-based emergency management programs are more robust.

This Forest Fire Emergency Plan was developed in collaboration with a representative from the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) Fire Program.

Aim and Scope

The aim of this Plan is to allow for a coordinated initial tactical response by a municipality and its partners to an emergency arising from a forest fire (e.g., dealing with smoke, structural and infrastructure protection, etc.). The scope of this Plan is to identify and detail lead agencies in the municipal response to forest fires, their roles and responsibilities, human and other resource requirements, emergency information needs, and financial and legal considerations.

Authority and Maintenance

This Plan is published as Schedule E to the Emergency Response Plan, as established under By-law 2025-87, and the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, RSO 1990.

The custodian of this Plan shall be the Corporation of the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC) and Emergency Management Program Committee (EMPC), and Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG), who are responsible for annual review, revisions, and testing of the Plan.

Description of Hazard and Risk

The advice of a representative from the MNR Fire Program was invaluable in determining the threat and risk to the Municipality from forest fires. The characteristics of hazard and risk should be reviewed regularly (e.g., annually or if significant changes occur) to ensure that changes in fire occurrences (e.g., whether the number of fires are increasing or decreasing, locations of fires, responsible groups, etc.) and actions taken

to address the risk (prevention, litigation, etc.) are incorporated. It is also important to consider any significant changes in land use, which may affect the hazard and risk due to forest fires.

Characteristics of Hazards

A forest fire hazard is the threat posed by natural fuels in forested areas within and adjacent to the Municipality and can be worsened by human activity (land clearing, forest, or industrial operations) with regards to the accumulation of slash (coarse and fine woody debris generated during logging operations or through wind, snow or other natural forest disturbances), or other human made flammable materials. The level of threat can vary, dependent on the composition and health of the forest, time of year, weather (moist or dry/drought conditions) and available sources of ignition. Forest fires removed from a municipality may also pose a threat due to smoke conditions and/or damage to critical infrastructure such as power lines.

Broadleaf tree species are less susceptible to fire than conifers because they generally contain more moisture in the leaves and less flammable resins; however, under dry to drought-like conditions, even these types of forests can be extremely flammable. Healthy forests are more resistant to fire than areas that have a large number of dead trees, which burn readily due to a lack of moisture. Forest fires can be ignited by nature, through lightning or by human sources. A growth in population, tourism, climate change, and industrial activity in and around forested areas may increase the threat of forest fires.

Fires in conifers can sometimes jump from crown to crown quickly, far outpacing a ground fire and adding to the urgency of the situation. Fires can also occur at interfaces between forest and agricultural land – often starting as grass fires and spreading to the forest, or vice versa. Ignition of wooded areas or grasslands from wind-dispersed burning embers can occur kilometres ahead of the fire, and smoke generated from fires can contribute to the complexity.

With the amount of forest in and around our Municipality, the intensity of the fire and the prevailing winds, a forest fire could impact a portion or all of a community. Smoke from even a small fire could affect vulnerable populations. The former St. Edmunds Township region is an area of great concern due to limited evacuation routes north of Johnsons Harbour Road and Hidden Valley Road. The lead time a municipality has to prepare for a forest fire can vary from almost zero if the fire starts within a built-up area, to hours or days if it ignites kilometres away and grows to impose a threat.

Areas of Protection within MNBP

Lindsay Tract is Bruce County's largest managed forest >7,000 acres, Lion's Head Provincial Nature Reserve, Bruce Peninsula National Park and Fathom Five National Marine Park, Smokey Head/White Bluff Provincial Nature Reserve, Ira Lake Provincial Nature Reserve, Black Creek Provincial Reserve, Cabot Head Provincial Nature Reserve, and Hope Bay Forest Provincial Nature Reserve.



Map of Northern Bruce Peninsula

Characteristics of Risk

A forest fire may bring inside or outside the boundary of the Municipality, differing legal and cost recovery implications. The Municipality may be threatened by smoke from distant forest fires or by flames as the fire gets closer.

The Municipal Community Risk Profile determined the risk that a forest fire hazard poses to the Municipality, was ranked third as a result of very dry weather conditions in 2023. According to the Hazard Identification Risk Assessment (HIRA) Protocol, it has been determined that our Municipality would likely be subject to the following hazards in order of likelihood:

1. Infectious disease (pandemic)
2. Winter weather (blizzards/snowstorms)
3. Wildland fire (forest fire)
4. Electrical energy (power failure)
5. Tornado (windstorm)
6. Extreme temperatures (heat)
7. Extreme temperatures (cold)
8. Flooding

Across the Province, the forest fire season varies in timing and duration. In our Municipality, the normal forest fire season runs from April 1 to October 31. It should be remembered that spring and fall grass fires could pose many of the same threats as forest fires. The population that may be impacted may be a mix of permanent and seasonal residents and commercial and industrial businesses. In the event of a forest fire in our area, it could greatly affect a vast number of people. Since this is a high seasonal transient area for cottage rentals, short-term accommodations (STAs), B&Bs, private rentals, and visitors, it is very difficult to determine the 'domino effect' that could impact our whole municipality.

The critical infrastructure of a municipality may be impacted by a forest fire. A map of the Municipality's critical infrastructure components that could be lost or disrupted in the short or the long-term by a forest fire has been developed. Preservation of critical infrastructure may help drive some of the site suppression priorities.

In the event of a forest fire in our Municipality, the economic impacts could be devastating to our area. Since Bruce Peninsula National Park and Fathom Five National Marine Park is a large employer to some permanent residents, a forest fire could affect the employment of these employees. Suppliers of firewood, mulch and other wood products from area forest lots could be impacted. Due to the area being a huge tourist destination, this could affect a lot of people. In addition, it would depend on the extent of damage; however, the M.S. Chi-Cheemaun ferry service to Manitoulin Island would also be impacted.

Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)

This layer stores the boundaries of fire management agreement areas negotiated by the Crown and on file with the Aviation Forest Fire and Emergency Services (AFFES) Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

The Forest Fire Prevention Act, R.S.O., 1994, Sec. 21(1) indicates that inside the Fire Region (IFR), municipalities are responsible to suppress grass, brush, or forest fires within their municipal boundaries.

By policy, AFFES must ensure that every fire in Ontario receives a response and every response is governed by the predicted behaviour of the fire; the potential impacts on people, property, or other values; and the estimated cost of each response. Consequently, the MNR enters into fire management agreements with municipalities in the IFR to ensure that municipal and MNR responsibilities are met, and fires are suppressed in a timely fashion.

Fire management agreements divide the land into four areas, including:

1. Crown Protection Area (CPA): The Crown is responsible for responding to incidents and the suppression of all fires in the CPA.
2. Municipal Protection Area (MPA): The municipality is responsible for responding to incidents and suppression of all fires in the MPA.
3. Federal Protection Area (FPA): The Federal Government is responsible for responding to incidents and the suppression of all fires in the FPA.
4. Northern Fire Protection Program (NFPP): The local fire department (mostly in unorganized areas) is responsible for responding to all incidents and the suppression of fires in the NFPP.

Response

Implementation of Plan

This Plan may be implemented in whole or in part, as required, by the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula, and the Incident Management System (IMS) would be instituted:

- The Mayor or alternate,
- Chief Administrative Officer (CAO),
- Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC) or alternate,
- Fire Chief, or
- The Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG), with or without the declaration of an emergency by the mayor or alternate.

This Plan may be activated through the notification of the Mayor or alternate, CAO, CEMC or Fire Chief.

Upon implementation, all participating departments and agencies will respond in accordance with the guidelines described within this Plan.

Functional Roles and Responsibilities

The Municipality will work with partners to determine functional roles and responsibilities. Departments and agencies that may be involved in a response include, but are not limited to, fire, police, paramedic services, emergency social services, volunteer agencies, Provincial ministries (e.g., Ministry of Natural Resources), Bruce Peninsula National Parks, Owen Sound Transportation Company (M.S. Chi-Cheemaun) and business representatives. The bullets below provide a sample of responsibilities that may need to be assigned by the MECG; however, this would depend on the location of the forest fire:

- Act as head of the Municipal Emergency Control Group
- Declare an emergency and order a partial or total evacuation of the Municipality
- Liaise with Bruce Peninsula National Park and Fathom Five National Marine Park
- Ensure rapid and accurate transmission of information to the media in cooperation with the partners (e.g., Ontario Provincial Police, MNR)
- Gather, process, and disseminate information from emergency services and agencies
- Provide communications in support of emergency or disaster operations as required
- Control movement within the evacuated area (could involve Tobermory Airport)
- Provide security in and around the evacuated area
- Public Works Department provide barricades to close off access to evacuated areas
- Public Works Department arrange for the MNR to access water sources, if required, for suppression
- Provide water tanks to the MNR and the fire department as another source of water
- Arrange for the transportation of evacuees who require assistance to evacuate
- Provide initial fire suppression on forest fires that start within or near the Municipality
- Cooperate with the MNR on fire suppression and in providing requested resources
- Provide assistance to the police in conducting an evacuation of the Municipality
- Arrange for shelter and/or housing of evacuees
- Provide advice and direction on air quality and the need to evacuate the vulnerable populations with assistance from Grey Bruce Public Health
- Enact Mutual Aid plans if required
- Rescue and firefighting services
- Control panic in the firefighting area
- Establish routes for emergency vehicles

- Notify the hospital of casualties, including the number and type
- Establish traffic and crowd control
- Eliminate hazards from damaged utilities
- Warning of the spread of fire
- Business continuity
- Emergency lodging of pets/livestock

Every municipality in the 'Fire Region', as defined by the Forest Fires Prevention Act, is responsible for the suppression of grass, bush, and forest fires within its limits (Section 21 of the Forest Fire Prevention Act). Under an Order in Council, the MNR has the responsibility for any provincial response to forest fires, and each Fire District has a District Emergency Response Team available to help municipalities address such an event. Under the Forest Fires Prevention Act, the MNR Fire Program has the responsibility for forest fire management on Crown Land in Ontario. Additionally, the MNR may suppress forest fires in municipal areas if the local fire department is not able to respond due to the location or size of the fire.

Many municipalities have agreements with the MNR for the suppression of forest fires. The agreements set rates for suppression services and an annual fee called a Comprehensive Protection Charge (CPC). The CPC is based on land ownership (private or Crown), and which partner looks after more of the other partner's area of responsibility. In some cases, the MNR pays the municipality, and in others, the municipality pays the MNR. In the absence of an agreement, the MNR will charge full cost recovery rates for its forest fire response services. The suppression costs for air and ground attacks on forest fires can escalate quickly, and a municipality will be responsible for their payment, whether or not an emergency is declared under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA).

In 2025, the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula entered into a Municipal Protection Agreement with MNR. This agreement provides a reduced cost if the MNR is required to suppress a forest fire in the municipality, and provides a fee for service to the Municipality for Northern Bruce Peninsula Fire & Emergency Services for suppressing fires within he municipality.

Therefore, the lead agency for forest fire suppression will either be the MNR or the municipality, and the lead agency may change over the duration of the emergency. Many fire situations begin with an inter-agency response where both the Municipal Fire Service and the MNR work together to bring the fire under control. Factors such as fire location, fire behaviour, resource availability, during of the event, and the size will determine who takes the lead. The Municipality will be the lead for the municipal emergency response (e.g., evacuation) with the MNR providing support if requested.

The MNR manages large and dangerous forest fires with an Incident Management Team (IMT) drawn from anywhere in the Province or across North America. The IMT and suppression and support staff are usually based near the forest fire, but may be far away from a municipality; however, they could be located in a municipality with staff focusing on values protection and other fire management priorities within the municipality with regard to the incident.

Specific responsibilities the MNR may be assigned include:

- Determining the location of an Incident Command Post, which could be for the MNR alone or developed as an Interagency Command Post, depending on the situation
- Providing forest fire suppression
- Protecting values on a priority basis
- Liaising with the District Emergency Response Team and the Municipal Emergency Control Group

Specific arrangements will need to be made in those areas not included in the MNR's fire protection area (for inhabited areas, this applies to much of southern Ontario). Municipalities in this circumstance need to discuss the MNR's role, if any, in fires.

Evacuation and Shelter-in-Place

Although a fire may be relatively small, its location can pose an immediate risk to people and property, and a swift evacuation of all, or part of the Municipality may be necessary. A forest fire that ignites several kilometres away from a municipality may pose a threat as it grows in size. Initially, smoke from the fire may cause health problems in vulnerable populations, forcing their evacuation. The smoke may hamper firefighting operations and traffic where visibility is impacted. Later, as the fire moves toward a community, it may threaten people and property and cause the evacuation of more of the population.

An MNR District Emergency Response Team may assist a municipality with evacuations, if requested. The MNR contacts are attached to this guideline as a confidential page. The evacuation is usually directed by police and municipal fire emergency services.

The evacuation of vulnerable populations may require special resources, and the Bradley Davis Apartments (Tobermory) and Golden Dawn Nursing Home (Lion's Head) are areas of vulnerable populations. These facilities would be contacted to see what arrangements are in place and what equipment is needed to evacuate these people quickly.

Our Municipality already has an Evacuation Plan that is Schedule B to By-law 2025-87.

Evacuation should be considered when other response measures are insufficient to ensure public safety. See Schedule B (Evacuation Plan) for the full list of factors considered in the decision to evacuate and how the urgency of an evacuation is determined.

Evacuation Plan

Forest fire evacuations follow the Municipality's Evacuation Plan (Schedule B) in full, including activation steps, evacuee registration, temporary shelters/evacuation centres, reciprocal arrangements with the Town of South Bruce Peninsula, and school board coordination. The considerations below are specific to forest fire evacuations.

Alerting the population at risk of an impending forest fire in cottage country is very difficult; however, possible methods of warning may include a message on the Alert Ready system, door knocking, media broadcasts, mobile public address, telephone call and electronic media. The alert would identify the forest fire zone(s) and travel route(s), identify the evacuation centre locations, and advise of the method of declaring evacuation and relocation. The movement of disabled persons, transient population, including vacationers and, in some cases, school population, and any voluntary evacuees would be a priority.

Planning for Your Pet in the Event of Forest Fire Evacuation

If considering moving animals to a safer place, do so early to avoid unnecessary risk. It may not be possible to take your pet with you to a temporary evacuation shelter – plan ahead and be prepared.

- Secure animals inside before an emergency event, so that they do not take flight or run away.
- Use a secure pet carrier/cage, leash, or harness to move any animals to safety.
- Ensure all vaccinations remain current.
- It may be possible for your pet to be boarded in a safe environment away from the forest fire emergency zone.
- If you are able to house your animal in a temporary foster home, ensure your pet's medical and feeding information, food, medicine, and other supplies accompany them to the foster home.
- Ensure all pets are properly identified. Remember – during times of disaster, telephones may not be available, and it is important that any registered method includes your current address.
- Have a current photograph. This may assist in easily identifying you as the legal owner.

Emergency Information and Communications

Communications can be pre-scripted for potential forest fire emergencies or can be drawn from existing sources. If no emergency information plan exists, the Emergency Information Officer may be asked to develop pre-written news releases.

The Municipality's public education program does include information on forest fires as part of the annual emergency management program. Our Emergency Plan is located on the Municipal website to assist residents and visitors to our area with regard to preparedness and response measures.

The CEMC has established campground, newspaper, radio, and ratepayers email contact listings, which will be a great assistance in the dissemination of emergency information prior to the emergency, especially to the local media. Media contacts for both business and after-hours are listed to help reach as many people as possible with messaging.

Throughout the forest fire season, Bruce Peninsula National Parks daily fire weather report provides information on the current fire ratings. The Municipal CEMC ensures that the latest information is released

to the public in a consistent fashion through the Emergency Information Officer for the fire rating on the Municipal website, if applicable. These updates help to relieve anxiety and to address misinformation and rumours about the fire rating situation.

Resources

During a forest fire emergency, the Northern Bruce Peninsula Fire and Emergency Services and/or the MNR will supply most of the resources to address the situation. The Municipality has Mutual Aid agreements with other municipalities and the County of Bruce. Other assistance, such as the Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) and Emergency Management Ontario (EMO), can be accessed through the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre.

The items below indicate resources that may be required in a forest fire emergency:

- Firefighting and rescue equipment
- Ambulances
- Water tankers
- Relay pumps
- Communications equipment
- Auxiliary lighting
- Auxiliary power
- Blankets and food
- Mobile public address system
- Emergency feeding facilities
- Barricades
- Equipment to repair utilities
- Heavy equipment (e.g., backhoes)
- Transportation vehicles
- Mobile generators
- An airport

The contact information for these resources can be found in the Emergency Plan directory area.

Finance

The Municipal Treasurer will be responsible for ensuring the following items can be dealt with:

- Pre-existing contracts with 24/7 suppliers
- Extraordinary expenditures
- Expenditure authorities (e.g., who can sign a purchase order)
- Human resources considerations (e.g., tracking of overtime, volunteers, collective agreements)
- Potential cost and recovery (e.g., third-party liability)
- Location and procedure for accessing emergency petty cash
- Donations management
- Implementation of programs, including the Disaster Recovery for Ontarians program and/or the Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance program.

Many of the finance points are addressed and included in the Municipal Emergency Plan. For quick reference, please refer to this Plan.

In addition, there may be a number of considerations specific to a forest fire emergency:

1. The MNR may recover costs from the Municipality where no previous agreement exists for fires on private land or in accordance with the terms of the Municipal Forest Fire Management Agreement.
2. As a natural disaster, the Municipality may be eligible for Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance funding.
3. Mutual assistance agreements with neighbouring municipalities, where they exist, will determine the responsibility for appropriate expenses.

Support/Supplemental Plans

The Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula has the following plans already established in addition to this Plan:

- Emergency Plan
- Evacuation Plan
- Pandemic Influenza Plan
- Warming/Cooling Centre Guidelines
- Animal Care Emergency Response Plan

- Flooding and/or High-Water Planning Guide

Prevention

Many factors influence the risk of wildland fires occurring and the way they will behave:

- Ecological factors are the main influences, such as forest type, tree age, topography, and weather.
- Human factors play a part in developed forest areas. For example, the risk of fire rises when forestry operations take place in dry conditions, and where logging roads give recreationists increased access to forested back country.
- Education for Bruce Trail hikers with regard to proper campfire use.
- Campers on Flowerpot Island need to know the risks of improper use of fire pits on the island.

Awareness of all of these factors improves a Municipality's ability to reduce the fire risk around it, and to prepare for and recover from fires. Bruce Peninsula National Park and Bruce County Forestry Unit may have sophisticated tools for measuring ecological risk factors.

With the implementation of "The Fluent Information Management System" (Fluent IMS) that is part of the "Who's Responding" program, fire permits will be easier to control. This will further enhance the overall response performance of the Fire Department by making all firefighters aware of all permitted burns and their locations. This system was implemented on April 1, 2019.

Public awareness programs such as FireSmart are helping communities manage and reduce fire risk.

The FireSmart manual and website provide homeowners, landscape planners and forest managers with advice on how to protect homes and communities located in forest areas. These resources also provide tools to help increase public safety, protect structures, and reduce evacuation and firefighting costs.

Fire danger rating signage was installed just north of Swan Lake on Highway 6 in 2017. During a fire ban, the area below the current fire rating symbols stores an additional area that will display the fire ban signage information, if necessary. This large sign will assist the residents and visitors to the area with the status of the current fire ratings and/or the fire ban warning. It is anticipated that this signage will encourage forest fire safety awareness.

Campfire safety tips are published in the Bruce Peninsula Press along with other fire prevention articles on a monthly basis.

Mitigation

The Municipality has taken mitigation actions such as fire-resistance maintenance standards for buildings and broader land use planning, like buffer areas.

The Northern Bruce Peninsula Fire and Emergency Services conducts and/or supervises fire suppression burns to reduce the amount of ground fuels.

In addition, the Northern Bruce Peninsula Fire and Emergency Services has assisted Bruce Peninsula National Park with supervision of suppression burns in the past. Controlled burns must continue to reduce fire risks. Limited fuel means limited fires.

Preparedness

To ensure preparedness initiatives are instigated for forest fire awareness, the Municipality must promote training, public education, and communicate the message to staff and the general public.

Recovery

The goal is for the Municipality, residents, and businesses to recover from the event. This includes restoring the physical infrastructure where possible or desirable, as well as addressing the emotional, social, economic, and physical well-being of those involved.

Consider mitigation actions during recovery operations to lessen the impact of future reoccurrences of similar events, such as fire-resistant infrastructure.

Consider establishing a recovery information centre where the impacted individuals can obtain additional information on the recovery process.

Post Event Activities – Debriefs

- Quick tactical debriefing (hot wash)
- More detailed operational debriefing
- Questionnaire (to volunteers, contractors, media, owners of facilities used, etc.) in order to identify gaps and future considerations for improvement
- Development of an after-action report, a financial report, and a report to the Emergency Management Program Committee and Council

As soon as possible, a debriefing will be held, and any lessons learned will be incorporated into this Plan.

Contact Information

MNR

Fire indices and weather station http://www.ontario.ca/page/fire-intensity-codes

Forest Fire Management Centre (705) 564-6033 (fax)
(705) 690-0756 (cell)

Other

Fires/Emergencies on National Parks lands/waters (519) 596-2702

Fires on Provincial Crown lands 1-888-239-4565

Fires/Emergencies on private lands 911

Fires on First Nations lands (519) 534-1001 (Cape Croker)
(519) 797-3366 (Saugeen)

Duty Warden Bruce Peninsula National Park (519) 596-2702 (24/7)

We are attempting to make every document accessible, but there may still be difficulty in recognizing all of the information. Please contact the Accessibility Coordinator if you require assistance, and we will make every attempt to provide this information in an alternate format.

Amendment	Review Date	Change Date	Changed By
Updated disaster Assistance program information	November 21, 2023.	November 21, 2023.	J. Burt
Added in Alert Ready information for evacuations	November 21, 2023.	November 21, 2023.	J. Burt
Annual Review and Revisions	November 21, 2023	November 21, 2023.	J. Burt
Annual Review and Revisions	November 19, 2024.	November 19, 2024.	J. Burt
Annual Review and Revisions	December 2, 2025.	December 2, 2025.	J. Burt
Annual Review and Revisions	November 10, 2026.	November 10, 2026.	J. Burt