



CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE

City of Yellowknife Emergency Evacuation Framework – Overview

Introduction

The City of Yellowknife continuously updates and refines its Emergency Plan, including its Evacuation Plan. This document is a summary of key information for residents to be aware of.

Evacuation is a risk management strategy. It is the process of removing people from an area of imminent or actual threat to an area of safety in order to reduce the loss of life and the chance of an injury. An evacuation may be limited to a single building, a group of buildings, a neighbourhood, a geographic portion or whole community. Part of evacuation is also the safe return of the population once the threat has been removed. Careful planning is the key to effectively executed evacuations.

Types of Emergency Evacuations

The City plans for *tactical evacuations* and *strategic evacuations*.

A ***tactical evacuation*** would be required as a result of an imminent localized threat that requires immediate action and allows for little warning or preparation. Hazardous material accidents/incidents, building fires, and flooding are all examples of events that may require a tactical evacuation. The hazard Incident Commander (IC) or any authorized first responder (e.g. Fire Chief, Incident Commander, RCMP) at the scene of the event can order the tactical evacuation of persons with no formal documentation. While a State of Local Emergency is not required for a tactical evacuation to take place, a formal Evacuation Order and State of Local Emergency for the area involved would be issued if residents need to remain out of the area for a prolonged period.

A ***strategic evacuation*** would be required as a result of a larger scale incident that threatens significant portions, or all, of the community, and would require a State of Local Emergency (SOLE) which City Council would declare (e.g., a wildfire¹, a community wide power outage in extremely cold temperatures). Once a declaration has been resolved by Mayor and/or Council, the City can consider evacuation process in coordination with North Slave Regional Emergency Measures Organization (REMO) which is coordinated by the GNWT.

When undertaking a strategic evacuation, it is a best practice to follow a three stage evacuation process as outlined below.

¹ See Appendix 2-Wildfires



The City of Yellowknife will issue strategic Evacuation Alerts and Orders through the City’s Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), with approval from the Mayor and Council, as applicable. Please see Appendix 1 for sample evacuation instructions.

Residents may need to be sheltered in a safe area of the community and/or in a shelter that can withstand the potential impacts of the emergency. For wildfires, this may mean a building that can accommodate a large number of residents for at least a couple of days. The building should have a metal roof and siding and added protection including backup power, communications, survival supplies, sprinklers on the roof, and air intake controls and purification. In Yellowknife, the Multiplex and Fieldhouse have fulfilled the role of evacuation centres on a number of occasions.

The legal authority under which the City can order a strategic evacuation is mandated within the *Emergency Management Act*, s. 18. Under this legislation, the City can declare a State of Local Emergency giving access to the emergency powers. Under a State of Local Emergency, the City may do any act or thing to mitigate, respond to and recover from the effects of the emergency. A State of Local Emergency must be declared for an **evacuation order** to be valid. Boundaries of the declaration of a state of local emergency **must cover all areas under evacuation**.

Support for Vulnerable People

The City of Yellowknife will give careful consideration to evacuating vulnerable populations during the Evacuation Alert stage. Experience demonstrates it takes longer to evacuate vulnerable people and, when conducted during the Evacuation Order stage, may increase risks to the individuals and the first responders providing assistance.

Moving vulnerable populations during an Alert stage may also help to reduce stress, as they are evacuated during a time that is generally less intense than when an Evacuation Order is occurring and more considerations can be made for their comfort. The City would work with key stakeholder groups that support vulnerable populations to make this determination and evacuate as needed.

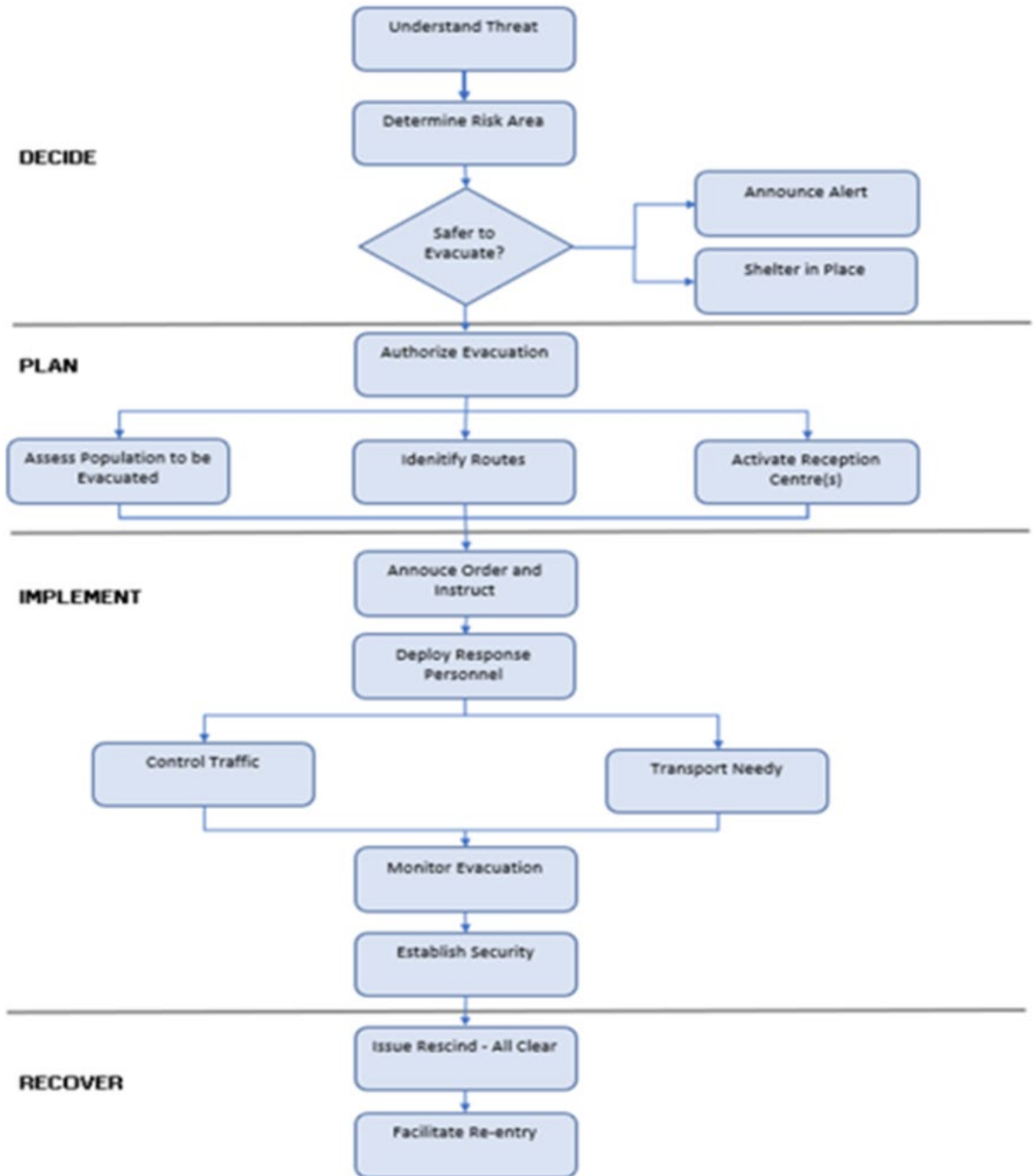
Vulnerable populations include those with the following:

- Communication challenges: limited ability to speak, see, and hear; read or understand English, limitations in learning and understanding.
- Medical challenges: assistance with bathing or feeding, managing medications, on dialysis or oxygen, operating power-dependent equipment to sustain life.
- Independence challenges: maintaining functional independence with medical equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, or scooters.

- Supervision needs: persons with dementia or Alzheimer's, prisoners, and unaccompanied children.
- Transportation needs: persons unable to drive due to disabilities, legal restrictions, socio-economic factors.
- At-risk populations: transient or homeless, substance abuse issues, mental health challenges, and those experiencing intergenerational trauma.

Yellowknife Emergency Strategic Evacuation Process Overview

Evacuation Process Overview



APPENDIX 1

Sample Evacuation Instructions

1. Stay calm.
2. Gather your family; take a neighbour or someone who needs help.
3. Evacuation Alert: Assemble essential items such as wallet, government-issued ID, medications, eyeglasses, valuable papers (e.g. insurance, credit, and mortgage information), immediate care needs for dependents and, if time and space permits, keepsakes for quick departure. Be ready to leave at a moments notice.
4. Wait for an Evacuation Order to be issued before evacuating.
5. Monitor [news/radio/online source] for information on evacuation orders and location of activated Reception Centres [and Assembly Points].
6. Evacuation Order: Take essential and critical items. Take pets in pet kennels or on leash.
7. Turn off appliances (stove, light, and heaters).
8. Do not use more vehicles than you require.
9. Do not use the telephone unless you need emergency service.
10. Go immediately to the identified location outside the evacuation area, located at:
_____.
11. Regardless of whether you require support, register through the evacuation portal (insert emails address for GNWT portal) or follow the instructions below:

as soon as possible to ensure you are registered as an evacuee. This will assist the local Emergency Program with their response and ensure that your safety can be verified with family and friends outside the area.
12. Emergency Response Workers will be stationed at intersections along the way to direct you.
13. If you need transportation, call: _____ or
_____.

APPENDIX 2 - WILDFIRE

What would happen if a Wildfire Threat Required an evacuation?

- During any potential emergency or threat to the community, the City's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) meets daily assess potential risks for Yellowknife.
- The City would work with key partners to assess the risk of wildfire and determine the areas of our community that are vulnerable, taking in to account factors such as wind direction and natural fire breaks such as the sandpits, the airfield at YZF, Giant and Con mine sites.
- The EOC would work with key partners to develop a fast and strategic response that would include cutting fire breaks, implementing sprinklers and other actions that would protect areas at risk.
- In the event that an evacuation was required for all or a portion of Yellowknife, the City would work with the GNWT to follow our Evacuation Framework, which lays out the steps for strategic evacuations, including:
 - understanding the threat,
 - determining the at-risk area,
 - determining whether its safer to evacuate or shelter in place,
 - targeting resources proactively to mitigate and reduce risk,
 - Alerting residents that there may be a need to evacuate (Evacuation Notice),
 - Establishing evacuation reception centre(s),
 - Identifying any special needs or unique scenarios where residents require additional support/assistance, including for vulnerable persons,
 - If/when the need to evacuate is confirmed, issue Evacuation Order. Residents would receive an Emergency Alert on their cellphone; information would be put out on the City's website and social media; information would be sent to the media; and the City may also go door-to-door with its partners, such as the RCMP, if need be,
 - Identifying safe routes and activate reception centres,
 - Arranging transport for those who need and proactively control traffic flow to the evacuation centres.