

## **THE EMERGENCY & DISASTER PREPAREDNESS TEAMS ON SATURNA**

Besides the volunteer firefighters and emergency medical responders of SIR (Saturna Island Rescue), there are many other residents trained to help out under certain emergency circumstances. This is what they do and who they are.

There are four teams of these volunteers who work cooperatively to provide assistance in times of disaster or larger scale emergencies.

1. The Emergency Support (Social) Services (ESS) team operates out of the Recreation Centre under the leadership of Bev Lowsley and her deputy Ingrid Gaines may set up a warming centre or a reception centre and help with evacuees.
2. The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) team led by Dawn Wood and deputy Brian Haley operate as part of the CRD Area Emergency Operations Centre . (For a few years, we were called a CCC or Community Coordination Centre; however, it was decided it wasn't helpful to exist as an anomaly in the Emergency Program (EP) structure which has been standardized for all North America.)
3. The Communications team (Comms) with coordinator David Rees-Thomas and deputy Wayne Quinn organize the Kenwood radio relay system and assist at an EOC.
4. The coordination of Neighbourhood Program (NP) Contacts is overseen by Leigh Field and her deputy Lin Sohier who keep the Telephone Tree updated as well.

The latter three will function in either ESB1 or ESB2 (Emergency Services Building) depending on the location and nature of the incident. Saturna also has two reps on the Southern Gulf Islands Emergency Commission (David Rees-Thomas and John Wiznuk) and we are supported by area coordinators.

The types of incidents in which Saturna volunteers will be called upon to assist include wildfires, earthquakes, propane or oil spills and severe winter storms with extended power outages and/or blocked roads. The incident may only require the supply of food or shelter (ESS) or it may require the assistance of administrative support (EOC).

Sometimes, David Rees-Thomas as our Communications Coordinator may initiate island wide contact through the Kenwood radio system or be in touch with Ham radio operators or people with VHS radios in their boats, if all other systems fail. Otherwise, he or his substitute will be at an ESB and their role is to relay relevant information to the EOC, the ESS operation and the Medical Clinic. Wayne Quinn assists in the Comms room at ESB1 when there's an incident and David is busy with SIR.

As Neighbourhood Program Coordinator/Recruiter, Leigh Field may contact a key person in one or several areas of the island to alert people to the incident or if evacuation might be necessary. She or Lin Sohier will be the initiator of the Telephone Tree system.

The neighbourhoods define themselves quite naturally: Winter Cove, Old Point Farm, the Valley, Group of 30 and sections of Tumbo Channel Road, for example. Since so many Saturna property owners are part-time residents, each key contact person is responsible for contacting between 10 and 20 properties in their neighbourhood; thus part of this responsibility is to have a sense of who might be on island – are they only summer or part-time people? - Or might they just be off island for the day? If you don't know who your neighbourhood contact person is, it's a good idea to find out.

Our most time consuming task is to try and keep accurate lists of residents and property owners, to know whether or not they have a landline or cell phone and whether or not there are buildings on their property (particularly important in case of a fire and pending evacuation.) Evacuations from homes are usually conducted by the RCMP or the Fire Department, but this local awareness can be of crucial assistance. The Saturna EOC has identified possible marine evacuation points around the island. Do you know the one or two closest to your place of work or home?

The EOC team takes turns carrying a pager and responding via the Crest radio system 24/7/52 and we have weekly test check-ins. Regular pager carriers are Brian Haley, Patti Fraba, Ron Hall, John McMillan, Teresa Higgins, Paul Bruhn, Mike Oreskovic, myself and, when here, Nevar Makofka. During an incident of significant impact, this team fills the role of supplying administrative support locally – supplying reports to the CRD and area coordinators, tracking events, helping to keep order or arrange supplies of goods or equipment, keeping records both written and pictorial, while also functioning as a liaison, particularly with the ESS team. We've taken training courses and twice per year have practice sessions, such as tabletop or simulation exercises.

The team of volunteers that is the ESS team, are coordinated by Bev Lowsley and assisted by Ingrid Gaines. When people who need help or need to be relocated go to the Recreation Centre, they will be registered, checked for injuries at a triage area, given treatment, food and/or lodging as required, assisted with pet or child care, etc. Other ESS volunteers will be directing parking outside, taking care of security or offering referral assistance. Many will be in the kitchen preparing food as firefighters and ambulance responders along with others directly involved in incident control, including reinforcements from off-island, who will need to be fed. There are many “overlap” people from the Neighbourhood Contacts on this team list; however, as with the EOC, for a lengthy incident, volunteers will function in shifts – probably 12 hours on and 12 off. And always, one needs to take care of one's own home situation first.

These teams of volunteers spend many hours planning, training and preparing for events we all hope will never happen. The earthquake and tsunami in Japan as well as other tornados, hurricanes, etc have shown us just how much devastation, turmoil and chaos can be triggered by natural disasters. As I acknowledge and honour the commitment of volunteer time and energy contributed, I know most of us pray we'll never have to put what we've learned into practice. We appreciate the many resources and skills in our midst. However, we also know that the Saturna community will work cooperatively together, and for this we are all grateful.