

Chapter 12

Government Relations – Coordinating Emergency Preparedness

1.0 MAIN POINTS

Emergency management in Canada is a shared responsibility between individuals and each level of government. Emergency management includes four key functions: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. The Ministry of Government Relations (Ministry) is responsible for coordinating, developing, promoting, and implementing policies and programs of the Government of Saskatchewan related to emergency planning (i.e., preparedness), coordination, and services.

The Ministry coordinates with various stakeholders involved in emergency management in Saskatchewan, including provincial government agencies, the federal government, municipalities, First Nations, private sector agencies, and other provincial governments.

In accordance with legislation,¹ the Ministry maintains the *Provincial Emergency Management Plan* (Plan) for the provision of necessary services during an emergency and the procedures for responding to an emergency. The Plan is intended to direct cross-government emergency planning, response, and recovery.

We found that, for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2014, the Ministry had, other than for the following areas, effective processes to coordinate emergency preparedness for emergencies in the province.

The Ministry needs to follow its established process to work with key stakeholders (i.e., certain provincial government agencies) on identifying and updating, each year, assessments of risks of emergencies requiring provincial assistance. It also needs to periodically and formally confirm that emergency management plans of all key stakeholders align with the *Provincial Emergency Management Plan*.

Furthermore, the Ministry needs to give guidance to key stakeholders to help them determine which infrastructure is critical to emergency preparedness for the province overall. It also needs to keep minutes supporting deliberations and decisions of the Provincial Emergency Management Committee.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ministry is responsible for coordinating, developing, promoting, and implementing policies and programs of the Government of Saskatchewan related to emergency planning, coordination, and services.² Also, the Ministry of Government Relations is responsible for *The Emergency Planning Act* (Act)³ and the provincial Emergency Management Organization (EMO).⁴ The Act sets out powers and dictates specific

¹ *The Emergency Planning Act*.

² *The Ministry of Government Relations Regulations*, s. 3.

³ Order in Council 284/2014 dated June 5, 2014.

⁴ Order in Council 506/2014 dated September 24, 2014.



responsibilities of the provincial EMO and local authorities (i.e., municipalities) for emergency planning in Saskatchewan.

The provincial EMO is part of the Ministry of Government Relations – the Emergency Management and Fire Safety (EMFS) branch. This branch “is responsible for coordinating overall provincial emergency planning, training and response operations for the safety of Saskatchewan residents, and for the protection of property and the environment before, during and after an emergency or a disaster.”⁵

This chapter describes the results of our audit of the Ministry’s processes to coordinate emergency preparedness for emergencies in the province.

Emergencies in the province can include those that are widespread (i.e., affect multiple communities), cause significant disruption or delay in services, have a definite and potential widespread threat to life, or cause significant damage to infrastructure. Examples of emergencies include natural events such as floods, forest fires, and health epidemics as well as human-caused events such as infrastructure failure or transportation incidents (e.g., train derailments).⁶ These emergencies may require support from the provincial government (i.e., one or more of its agencies).

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Emergency Management

Emergency management includes the following four key functions, also referred to as “pillars” – mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery (see **Figure 1**).

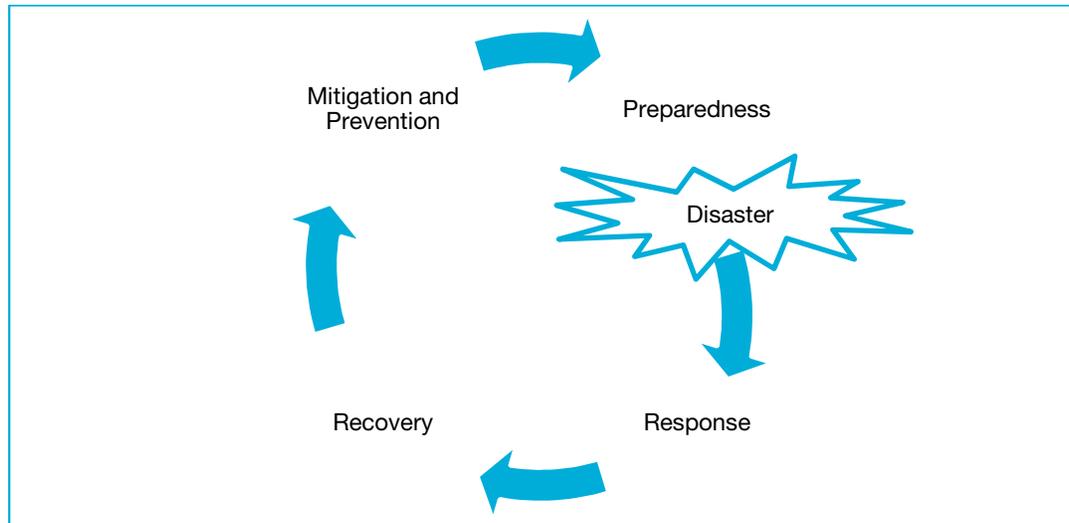
- › **Mitigation** includes measures to eliminate or reduce the risks of disasters (e.g., construction of floodways, land use planning, etc.).
- › **Preparedness** includes measures taken prior to an event or to be ready to respond to a disaster and manage its consequences (e.g., emergency plans, mutual aid assistance agreements, emergency response training and equipment).
- › **Response** includes measures taken during or after an event to manage consequences (e.g., emergency public communication, search and rescue).
- › **Recovery** includes measures taken after a disaster to repair or restore conditions to an acceptable level (e.g., reconstruction, providing financial assistance).⁷

Each pillar is interconnected. Mitigation and preparedness occur before an emergency event and are intended to reduce the impact of the event. Response and recovery are initiated after an emergency event has occurred. Lessons learned from response and recovery are normally incorporated into programs for mitigation and preparedness.

⁵ www.gr.gov.sk.ca/Protection-and-Emergency-Services (12 September 2014).

⁶ Ministry of Government Relations, *Provincial Emergency Management Plan 2013-2016*.

⁷ Ibid.

Figure 1 – Four Pillars of Emergency Management

Source: Adapted from Public Safety Canada, *Emergency Management Planning Guide 2010-2011*, (2011), p. 4.

As shown in **Figure 2**, emergency management in Canada is a shared responsibility between individuals and each level of government.

Individuals are responsible for taking actions to protect themselves and their property. When an emergency is beyond the capacity of individuals to handle, local authorities (i.e., municipalities) are expected to lead the response.

Local authorities are primarily responsible for managing local emergencies. They are responsible for directing and controlling its emergency response. When an emergency is beyond the capacity of local authorities, the provincial government is expected to provide assistance. In Saskatchewan, local authorities are, usually by law, required to establish emergency measures organizations, appoint an emergency measures coordinator, establish an emergency planning committee, and establish a municipal emergency plan (See **Figure 3** for framework for emergency planning established for Saskatchewan local authorities).

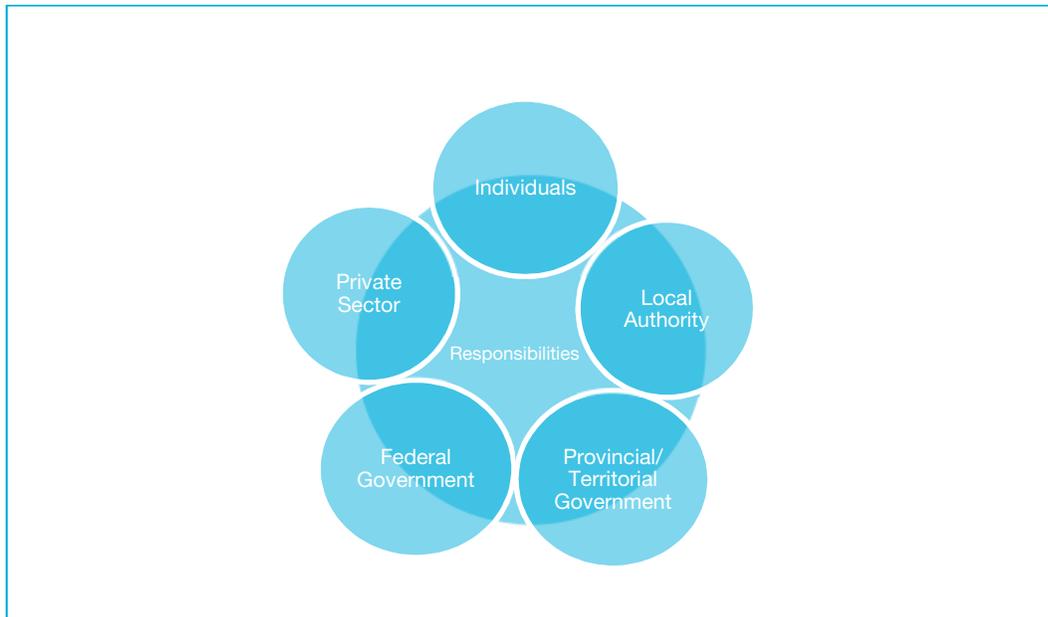
Provincial and territorial governments exercise responsibility for emergency management within their respective jurisdictions except where federal legislation allows for direct federal intervention or shared responsibility (see **Figure 3** for framework for emergency planning established for Saskatchewan provincial government – Ministry of Government Relations). If any emergency threatens to overwhelm the resources of a province or territory, or if an emergency has national implications, the federal government may respond to requests for assistance.⁸

The federal government exercises leadership at the national level relating to emergency management responsibilities in its exclusive fields of jurisdiction and on lands and properties under federal responsibility.⁹ The federal government has jurisdiction over First Nation lands and is responsible for emergency management on First Nations reserves.¹⁰

⁸ Public Safety Canada, *Federal Policy for Emergency Management*, (2009), p. 1.

⁹ Public Safety Canada, *An Emergency Management Framework for Canada Second Edition*, (2011), p. 6.

¹⁰ "Although emergency management is a provincial/territorial responsibility, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada has accepted responsibility for supporting emergency management in First Nations Communities." www.aadnc-aaandc.gc.ca/eng/1309372584767/1309372634626 (25 November 2014).

**Figure 2—Shared Responsibility for Emergency Management**

Source: Adapted from Auditor General of British Columbia, *Catastrophic Earthquake Preparedness*, (2014), p. 14.

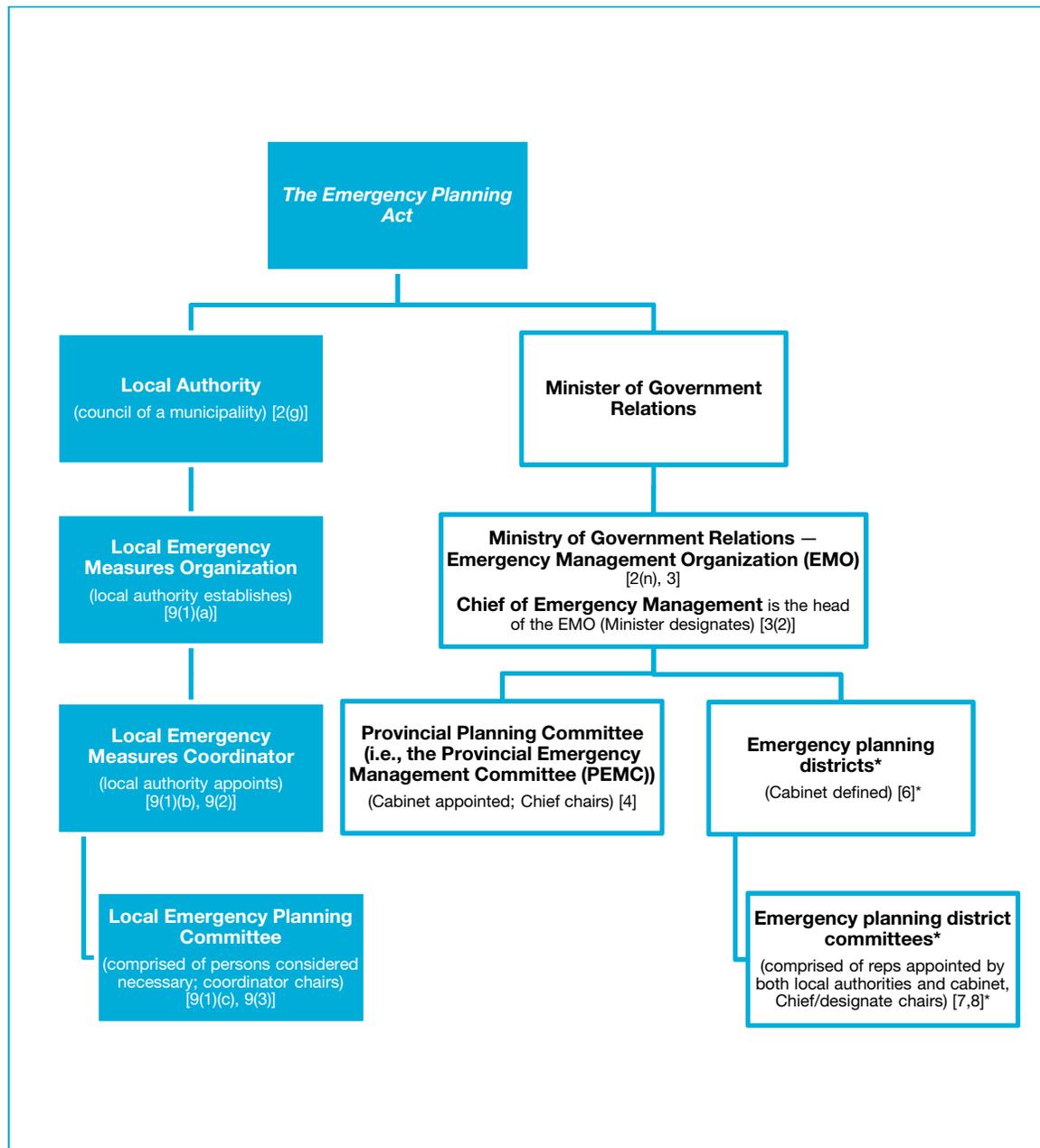
Most emergencies that occur are local in nature and local authorities manage them.¹¹ At December 2014, Saskatchewan's almost 800 different municipalities (local authorities) of varying sizes were tasked with managing them.

Provincial Emergency Measures Organizations (EMO) may provide assistance to local authorities when local resources and capabilities are overwhelmed or may soon become overwhelmed during an emergency, or when local authorities request provincial assistance. Even when a local authority requests help from an EMO, the local authority remains in control of its emergency response.

Provincial EMOs take control upon a **provincial** declaration of emergency. The Ministry declares a provincial emergency when an emergency poses a significant widespread threat to human life, property, infrastructure, or the environment. It may seek the assistance of the private sector and others if its resources become overwhelmed.

In Saskatchewan, the EMO is part of the Ministry (see **Figure 3**). As shown in **Figure 5**, the number of local states of emergencies declared each year in Saskatchewan have varied significantly over the last five years from a low of nine in 2012-13 to a high of 67 in 2011-12. To date, the Government of Saskatchewan has never declared a provincial emergency.

¹¹ Public Safety Canada, *An Emergency Management Framework for Canada Second Edition*, (2011), p. 3.

Figure 3—Framework Established Under *The Emergency Planning Act*

Source: Adapted from *The Emergency Planning Act*.

* At December 2014, no emergency planning districts or emergency planning district committees were established under *The Emergency Planning Act*. These districts and committees can be set up to organize inter-municipal emergency planning, training, assistance and emergency operations programs.

3.2 Saskatchewan's Emergency Planning Framework

As established in the Act, Cabinet appointed a provincial planning committee (referred to as the Provincial Emergency Management Committee – PEMC) consisting of representatives from 15 provincial agencies (i.e., government ministries, Crown corporations, and agencies) each with key roles in emergency management.¹² See

¹² Order in Council 350/2010 sets out the current committee members.



Exhibit 7.1 for a listing of agencies represented on PEMC. The Chief of Emergency Management chairs the PEMC (see **Figure 3**).

The Act makes PEMC responsible for preparing the *Provincial Emergency Management Plan (Plan)* for the Minister of Government Relations' approval, including the provision of necessary services during an emergency and the procedures for responding to an emergency.¹³ The Plan is intended to direct cross-government emergency planning, response and recovery.

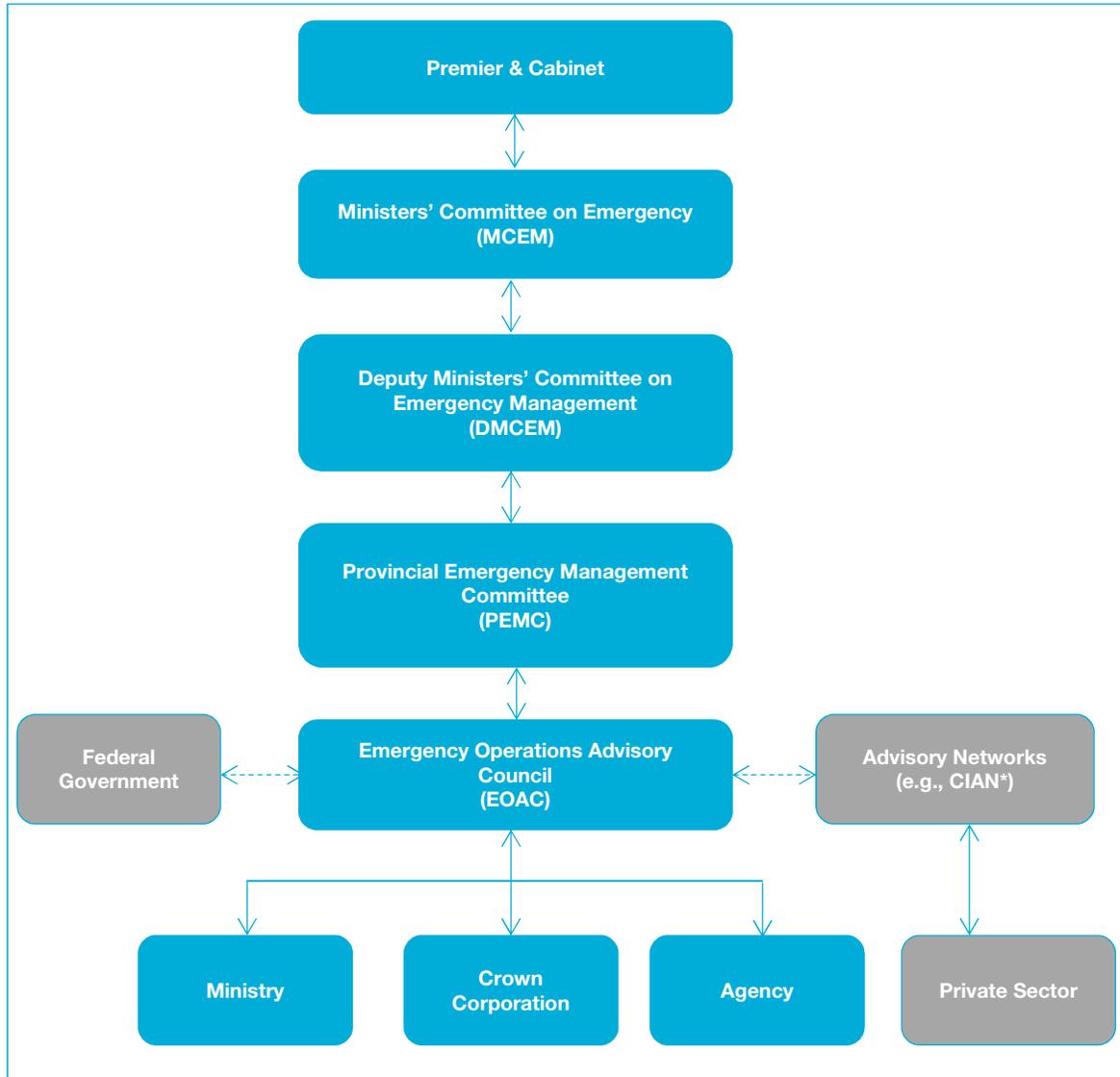
To fulfill its legislative requirements for emergency planning, the Ministry has established a provincial emergency planning governance structure (see **Figure 4**). The structure includes the PEMC as well as other inter-agency committees:

- › The Ministers' Committee on Emergency Management (MCEM) serves as an advisory body to Cabinet and the Minister of Government Relations and provides support, as may be required, to the Minister of Government Relations in carrying out responsibilities of the Act. The MCEM meets on an ad hoc basis during emergency situations and includes ministers responsible for provincial ministries/agencies impacted by the emergency.
- › The Deputy Ministers' Committee on Emergency Management (DMCEM) is a forum for discussion to assist in developing a Plan in relation to any emergency or disaster that may threaten the safety of Saskatchewan residents. The DMCEM is responsible for ensuring that policy decisions regarding multi-ministry, Crown corporation and agency concerns and actions are coordinated at the appropriate level. DMCEM consists of Deputy Ministers responsible for the agencies listed in **Exhibit 7.1**.
- › The Emergency Operations Advisory Council (EOAC) is a forum for discussion related to business continuity and emergency management issues and policies. The responsibilities of the EOAC include monitoring and evaluating changes in emergency practices, standards and legislation, assisting with the development and maintenance of the Plan, and identifying, evaluating and monitoring current and emerging emergencies or disasters and their potential implications for the government.¹⁴ It includes representatives from 16 ministries, nine Crown corporations, nine Treasury Board Crown agencies, the RCMP, Public Safety Canada, and the federal Department of National Defence – Domestic Operations. See **Exhibit 7.2** for listing of agencies represented on EOAC.

¹³ *The Emergency Planning Act*, s.13.

¹⁴ Ministry of Government Relations, *Provincial Emergency Management Plan 2013-2016*, s. 2.5.1.

Figure 4—Provincial Emergency Planning Governance Structure and Relationship to Other Stakeholders (in gray cells)



Source: Provincial Emergency Management Plan, Figure 2.1.

*CIAN refers to Critical Infrastructure Advisory Network. See Section 5.3.2.

3.3 Importance of Emergency Preparedness

As previously noted, emergency preparedness refers to measures taken prior to an event to be ready to respond to a disaster and manage its consequences (e.g., emergency plans, mutual aid assistance agreements, emergency response training and equipment, etc.). Effective emergency preparedness coordination includes coordinating preparedness with other provincial government agencies, as well as consultation and cooperation with other stakeholders such as the federal government, other provinces, municipalities, First Nations, and the private sector.

Emergency preparedness is important because the frequency and severity of emergencies (e.g., floods, forest fires, disease outbreak, train derailments) around the



world has increased in recent years.¹⁵ Saskatchewan has experienced variability in the frequency and severity of emergencies in recent years. The cost associated with emergencies can be expensive for the Government of Saskatchewan as it provides assistance to those affected (see **Figure 5**).

Figure 5—Provincial Disaster Assistance Program, EMFS Expenses and the Number of Local States of Emergency Declarations

Fiscal Year	Provincial Disaster Assistance Program (PDAP) Expenses (in millions)*	Emergency Management and Fire Safety (EMFS) Expenses (in millions)*	Number of Local State of Emergencies Declared**
2013-14	\$ 46.8	\$ 7.3	32
2012-13	72.6	4.7	9
2011-12	157.1	10.0	67
2010-11	48.2	4.4	17
2009-10	10.4	3.3	11
Total***	\$ 335.1	\$ 29.7	136

*Source: *Public Accounts Volume 2* 2009-10 to 2013-14. PDAP expenses include expenses related to flood damage and other disasters; flood damage makes up most of the expenses. EMFS expenses include costs for responding to emergencies including emergency management staff.

**Source: Ministry of Government Relations records in December 2014.

***At December 2014, information was not yet available for 2014-15.

During 2014, the Ministry's Emergency Management and Fire Safety branch (EMFS) provided assistance related to the following emergencies in Saskatchewan:

- › Flooding – Numerous areas of the province experienced flooding due to severe summer storms. Heavy rains at the end of June brought record-breaking amounts of rain to some communities, especially in the southeast of the province (e.g., Crooked Lake, Round Lake, and Last Mountain Lake)
- › Train derailment – A freight train hauling dangerous goods derailed east of the community of Clair in October. One train car carrying petroleum products burned.
- › Natural gas fire – An explosion and natural gas fire occurred at an underground natural gas storage facility near the village of Prud'homme in October.
- › Grass fire – A large grass fire near the Town of Kindersley threatened a communications tower in October.

Predicting when or where emergency events will occur is difficult because they happen suddenly and without warning. As a result, the province always needs to be prepared for a variety of different emergency situations. Having effective processes to coordinate emergency preparedness will help the government respond to emergencies in the province in a timely, efficient, and coordinated manner. This can help reduce the human and financial impact of emergencies and support the recovery process.

¹⁵ Ministry of Government Relations, *Provincial Emergency Management Plan 2013-2016*, s. 2.1.

4.0 AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, CRITERIA, AND CONCLUSION

The objective of this audit was to assess whether the Ministry of Government Relations had effective processes to coordinate emergency preparedness for emergencies in the province for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2014.

We focused our audit on the Ministry's role in coordinating emergency preparedness for the province, including the *Provincial Emergency Management Plan*. We did not examine the specific emergency plans of other provincial government agencies or local authorities (i.e., municipalities).

To conduct this audit, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance*. To evaluate the Ministry's processes, we used criteria based on related work and reviews of literature including reports of other auditors, and consultations with management. Management agreed with the criteria (see **Figure 6**).

We examined the Ministry's processes to coordinate emergency preparedness by interviewing Ministry management responsible for emergency preparedness and reviewing related documentation (including the *Provincial Emergency Management Plan*, risk assessments used in developing the Plan, guidance provided to government agencies and communications with stakeholders).

Figure 6—Audit Criteria

- 1. Establish a provincial emergency management framework**
 - 1.1 Agree upon roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders (e.g., provincial government agencies, the federal government, municipalities, and First Nations)
 - 1.2 Promote a common approach to emergency management including the adoption of standards and best practices
 - 1.3 Align emergency management framework with legislation
- 2. Assess risk of hazards that impact the province**
 - 2.1 Work with key stakeholders to identify risks
 - 2.2 Evaluate risks (e.g., probability, impact)
 - 2.3 Prioritize risks based on the assessment
- 3. Prepare a risk-based provincial emergency management plan**
 - 3.1 Establish a planning cycle
 - 3.2 Coordinate with key stakeholders to prepare a risk-based plan
 - 3.3 Require alignment of key provincial government agencies' emergency plans with the provincial plan
 - 3.4 Identify resources required (financial and human resources, training, equipment)
 - 3.5 Establish coordinated system for public communication
 - 3.6 Obtain Ministerial approval of the plan
- 4. Test key components of the provincial emergency management plan**
 - 4.1 Coordinate with key stakeholders to periodically test key components of the plan
 - 4.2 Regularly review and update the plan (e.g., incorporating lessons learned from past emergencies and results of testing exercises)

We concluded that, for the year ended December 31, 2014, the Ministry of Government Relations had, other than for the following areas, effective processes to coordinate emergency preparedness for emergencies in the province. The Ministry needs to:

- › **Keep minutes supporting deliberations and decisions of the Provincial Emergency Management Committee**



- › **Follow its established process to work with key stakeholders on identifying and updating, each year, assessments of risks of emergencies requiring provincial assistance**
- › **Provide key stakeholders responsible for key infrastructure in Saskatchewan with guidance to help them determine which infrastructure is critical to emergency preparedness for the province overall**
- › **Periodically and formally confirm that emergency management plans of all key stakeholders align with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan**

5.0 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we set out the criteria (expectations) in italics, our key findings, and related recommendations.

5.1 Provincial Emergency Management Framework Established

We expected the Ministry to identify key stakeholders and agree upon emergency management roles and responsibilities with those stakeholders. The Ministry would use standards and best practices to develop its emergency management framework. The framework would align with the requirements set out in relevant legislation (i.e., The Emergency Planning Act). The Ministry would communicate its emergency management framework to stakeholders and provide advice and assistance to them, as needed, to assist in their emergency planning process.

5.1.1 Stakeholder Identification

The Ministry has identified various stakeholders involved in emergency preparedness in the province, some of whom are key to its emergency preparedness. It considers nine provincial agencies (i.e., the Ministries of Environment, Government Relations, Health, Highways and Infrastructure, and Social Services, SaskEnergy, SaskPower, SaskTel, and Water Security Agency) as key stakeholders for the purposes of provincial emergency preparedness including the preparation of the Provincial Emergency Management Plan. As such, the Ministry actively coordinates with and engages them in its emergency preparedness activities as described later in this section.

Other stakeholders that it has identified include the federal government, municipalities, First Nations, and others (e.g., private sector agencies such as the Canadian Red Cross, other provincial governments). For these other stakeholders, the Ministry undertakes various measures as described later in this section so that each party's roles and responsibilities in relation to emergency preparedness are clearly understood.

Certain Provincial Government Agencies – Key Stakeholders

A provincial emergency planning Cabinet directive approved in February 1986 and updated in November 1999 originally set out the roles and responsibilities of the key

stakeholders. The directive sets out general planning-related responsibilities for these key stakeholders. Roles and responsibilities include requirements to appoint an emergency planning officer (EPO), assess risk, prepare and maintain an agency-specific emergency plan, coordinate plans with others, advise local officials regarding municipal emergency plans, participate in testing exercises, and annually meet with the Ministry to review roles and responsibilities. The directive also sets out more directed roles and responsibilities for response activities (e.g., types of resources key stakeholders will provide during emergencies, types of emergencies the agency will take the lead on, etc.) for each key stakeholder as they relate to their mandate. These roles and responsibilities are now included in *The Provincial Emergency Management Plan* for 2013-2016 (Plan). We found that the Cabinet directive is aligned with the Plan and both align with the Act.

Ministry management indicated that the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders are updated through discussions at EOAC meetings. As part of this process, each key stakeholders' EOAC member (i.e., EPO) is asked to provide confirmation of his/her agency's roles and responsibilities.

We observed evidence that EOAC and PEMC members provided agreement with their agency's roles and responsibilities in 2012 when the Plan was prepared. However, we were not able to see evidence of roles and responsibilities being discussed at any meetings in subsequent years because neither EOAC nor PEMC keep minutes of their meetings. We saw evidence that the Ministry actively updates the Plan for changes to roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders. For example, the 2014 Plan amendments, communicated to all EPOs, included such changes. However, without documentation of its meetings, we could not verify that the PEMC deliberated on or approved these amendments.

It is important for committees charged with making decisions to keep a record of those decisions. Minutes provide documentation of decisions made and the relevant deliberations leading to the decision. The PEMC is the key committee responsible for making decisions related to the Plan (the EOAC, MCEM, and DMCEM are used as forums for sharing emergency management information).

- 1. We recommend that the Ministry of Government Relations require the Provincial Emergency Management Committee to keep minutes documenting its deliberations and supporting its decisions.**

Federal Government – Other Stakeholder

As previously noted, provincial and territorial governments exercise responsibility for emergency management within their respective jurisdictions. As such, the federal government does not have an active role in provincial emergency preparedness unless a province requests federal assistance (and as a result is not considered a key stakeholder). The federal government is involved with managing certain critical infrastructure, which is discussed further in **Section 5.3**.

In 2011, the Minister along with other provincial/territorial governments signed an Emergency Management Framework with the federal government. This framework sets out the roles and responsibilities of the federal government and the provincial/territorial



governments.¹⁶ At December 2014, the Ministry and other provincial/territorial governments were working with the federal government on specific protocols to obtain federal assistance (e.g., financial resources, military support).

Municipalities (Local Authorities) – Other Stakeholder

Because the roles and responsibilities of municipalities vis-à-vis those of the provincial government is defined in provincial legislation, the Ministry does not need to seek their agreement on roles and responsibilities.

The Ministry recognizes the need for municipalities to have the capacity and skill sets to effectively respond when emergencies occur within their municipality. It knows that the level of preparedness of each municipality can directly impact the Ministry's emergency planning (if a municipality is not prepared it is more likely the provincial government will be asked to assist). As such, the Ministry regularly offers and provides municipalities with guidance/training on emergency planning to help foster better emergency preparedness at the municipal level. Furthermore, it recognizes the size and capacity of municipalities vary significantly in Saskatchewan (e.g., some municipalities have populations less than 100 whereas others have populations over 200,000). The Ministry generally provides guidance/training to communities most in need (i.e., those that have limited capacity). Through this guidance/training, the Ministry obtains an understanding of whether municipalities are aware of and understand their legislated role.

We observed that Ministry communications with municipalities were designed to help them understand their roles and responsibilities. For example, we observed evidence that the Ministry held periodic information sessions with municipalities to discuss emergency planning.

First Nations – Other Stakeholder

Similar to municipalities, the Ministry recognizes that the level of preparedness of First Nations can directly impact the Ministry's emergency planning. As previously discussed, the federal government has responsibility for emergency management for First Nations. At February 2015, the Ministry and the federal government were working on an agreement to formalize the Ministry's provision of emergency management services (e.g., providing public safety training and fire safety programs) for First Nations and the federal government's funding of such services. Similar to municipalities, the Ministry provides First Nations with guidance/training on emergency planning to help foster better emergency preparedness.

Other Organizations (Including the Private Sector) – Other Stakeholder

The Ministry may request assistance from other stakeholders (e.g., Canadian Red Cross, police services, and other provinces) if its own resources are overwhelmed. The Ministry is aware that certain key provincial government agencies have agreements with these other organizations as part of their emergency plans (e.g., the Ministry of Social Services has an agreement with the Canadian Red Cross). In addition, to facilitate the ability to seek assistance from other provinces expeditiously, in 2011, Saskatchewan along with all other provinces/territories signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the provision of inter-jurisdictional emergency management assistance. The MOU clearly

¹⁶ Public Safety Canada, *An Emergency Management Framework for Canada Second Edition*, (2011), p. 4.

sets out the responsibilities of each province/territory. In addition, at December 2014, the provinces/territories had draft standard operating procedures for how to request assistance.

5.1.2 Emergency Management Framework

The Ministry uses the *Provincial Emergency Management Plan (Plan)* to document its emergency management framework (see **Figure 7**). In addition to the Plan, annually, the Ministry maintains an Operational plan which contains more detail (e.g., logistics of deploying and repositioning supplies).

Figure 7—Hierarchy of Emergency Plans and Responsibility for Preparation



Source: Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan (March 2015).

The Ministry undertakes a comprehensive update of the Plan every three years. The last such update was in 2012. As part of this update, the Ministry researched best practices, reviewed the emergency plans of other jurisdictions (e.g., provincial and federal plans), and used practice guides provided by the federal government and Australia. Also, it used Alberta's emergency plan as guidance to develop the Plan.

We compared the contents of the Plan to certain emergency management practice guides (i.e., *Emergency Management in Australia—Concepts and Principles*, *Public Safety Canada's Emergency Management Planning Guide 2010-11*) and certain other jurisdictions (i.e., *Canada's Federal Emergency Response Plan*, *Alberta Emergency Plan*). We found the provincial Plan to be generally consistent with these guides and other jurisdictions' plans. When we compared the Plan to legislative requirements outlined in the Act, we found it establishes the positions and committees the Act requires (see **Figure 3**) and the duties and responsibilities of each were consistent with those specified in the Act.

The Ministry uses numerous methods to communicate the Plan to its key and other stakeholders. This includes sharing and discussing the Plan with key stakeholders through the EOAC. For Plan amendments, it sends a copy of them to all EOAC members. The Ministry provides materials to assist provincial government agencies in preparing their emergency plans. It discusses emergency planning and preparedness at PEMC and EOAC meetings.



The Ministry offers the *Nine Steps for Emergency Plan Development* program – a public safety program. Through this program it makes available, on its website, a guide for preparing emergency plans called *Nine Steps for Emergency Plan Development*¹⁷ and a DVD. This guide along with the DVD includes detailed information on how to prepare, implement, and maintain a local emergency plan.

It offers various courses and workshops to the municipalities, First Nations, and the public related to emergency management (i.e., basic emergency management, emergency operations centre, incident command systems, and *Nine Steps for Emergency Plan Development* workshop).¹⁸ It maintains, on its website, a calendar of emergency management courses that identifies when and where the courses are available. The courses vary in length from a half day to 1.5 days; its workshop is a half day.

The Ministry also holds public information sessions to inform municipal and First Nations representatives about the Plan. It provides these sessions on an ad hoc basis when it expects a community and surrounding area to face challenges from a specific threat. For example, in March 2014, it held sessions in Saskatoon, Battlefords, and Prince Albert to help the regions prepare for the threat of higher than normal water levels. Topics presented at recent sessions related to risk assessment, planning for emergencies, and a review of the role of municipalities and the province. It makes copies of the Plan available to stakeholders upon request. The Ministry expects to make the Plan publicly available (i.e., on its website) in 2017.

It does not formally communicate the Plan to the federal government. Rather, the Ministry discusses various aspects of the Plan through its participation in national emergency management conferences. At December 2014, the Ministry's Chief of Emergency Management was the co-chair of a federal-provincial committee on emergency management.

5.2 Updated Risk Information Needed

We expected the Ministry to have an established process to identify risk of hazards that impact the province, including both natural and human-caused events (all-hazards approach). The Ministry would work with key stakeholders to identify, evaluate, and prioritize risks.

The Ministry outlines its risk assessment process in the Plan. The process requires an annual identification of hazards and risk assessments based on the “probability of a hazard occurring and the impact of that occurrence”. The Ministry, working with its key stakeholders, assesses probability “through historical occurrences and through a risk intelligence process that accesses the hazard data through the appropriate agency”.¹⁹

The Plan requires its key stakeholders (i.e., the nine bolded provincial government agencies listed in **Exhibit 7.1**) to assess risk thresholds annually. Then, the Ministry is to compile and evaluate these results on a province-wide basis. The risks are to be evaluated based on probability and impact to determine emergency preparedness

¹⁷ www.saskatchewan.ca/~media/files/government%20relations/emfs/nine%20steps%20for%20emergency%20plan%20development-201403.pdf (March 2015).

¹⁸ www.saskatchewan.ca/live/public-safety-protection-and-emergency-services/additional-public-safety-resources/emergency-management-course-descriptions (17 March 2015).

¹⁹ Ministry of Government Relations. *Provincial Emergency Management Plan 2013-2016*, s. 2.5.1.

requirements. The overall assessment is then presented to the DMCEM on an annual basis in the Operational Plan (see **Figure 7**).

We found that the Ministry, in 2012, worked with key stakeholders to prepare a three-year provincial emergency management plan. When preparing the 2013-16 Plan, it worked with key stakeholders to identify, evaluate, and prioritize risks. The risk assessment included an assessment of the likelihood, severity, and potential impact of each risk. The assessments were documented on a risk matrix that allowed for comparison of risks. When assessing risks, the Ministry also consulted experts where considered necessary (e.g., meteorologists, engineers).

However, the Ministry did not follow its documented risk assessment process on an ongoing basis (i.e., annually) as the Plan contemplated. Rather, each year since 2012, the Ministry prepared an Operational Plan. The Operational Plan identifies some potential threats and outlines where the Ministry intends to focus emergency preparations during the year. As part of preparing the annual Operational Plan, the Ministry indicated that it informally gathered some updated risk information from key stakeholders (e.g., through EOAC and PEMC meetings). However, we were unable to see evidence of such because, as noted in **Section 5.1**, these Committees do not keep minutes of their meetings.

We found that the *2014 Operational Plan* included three of the higher-level risks from the 2012 assessment (i.e., flooding, fire, extreme weather). For the first two risks, we saw that the Ministry received some updated information on these risks from key stakeholders. However, for the remaining risks identified in the 2012 Plan (e.g., IT failure/cyberattack, prolonged power outage, pandemic, terrorist activity), the Ministry did not confirm with key stakeholders the continued appropriateness of the 2012 assessment of these risks.

Also, it did not compile and evaluate such assessments on a province-wide basis each year. Without such information, the Ministry may not be aware of any emerging risks or significant changes in risk exposure and as such, preparedness activities may not address these risks.

2. **We recommend that the Ministry of Government Relations follow its established process to work with key stakeholders on identifying and updating, each year, assessments of risks of emergencies requiring provincial assistance.**

5.3 Alignment of Key Stakeholders' Emergency Management Plans with the Provincial Plan Needs to be Confirmed

We expected the Ministry to prepare a risk-based provincial emergency plan based on an established planning cycle and obtain the Minister's approval of the plan. It would have a mechanism to coordinate with key stakeholders to gather input to incorporate into the plan, including identifying critical infrastructure in Saskatchewan. The Ministry would require, and periodically confirm, that key provincial government agencies' have detailed



emergency management plans that align with the provincial plan. The Ministry would identify resources required to execute the plan and assess current resources available to determine gaps. It would establish systems to communicate with key stakeholders and the public when an emergency occurs.

5.3.1 Risk-Based Emergency Management Plan

As previously noted, when developing the 2013-16 Plan, the Ministry conducted a risk assessment and prepared a three-year provincial emergency management plan. The Plan requires the Ministry to complete an annual review of the Plan and a more comprehensive review of the Plan every three years.²⁰ The PEMC has delegated the task of completing the annual review to the EOAC. The Deputy Minister of Government Relations approved the plan amendments in October 2014 resulting from the latest annual review. The next three-year review is due to occur in 2015.

Consistent with the requirements of the Act,²¹ the Deputy Minister of Government Relations approved the Plan (and the 2014 amendments) on behalf of the Minister of Government Relations.

5.3.2 Key Stakeholder Coordination

The Ministry used EOAC meetings and PEMC meetings to gather input from key stakeholders. For example, each Committee used lessons learned to consider the effectiveness of the Plan when it was activated during actual emergencies.

The Plan defines critical infrastructure as stand-alone (e.g., dam) or interconnected and interdependent (e.g., power grid) within and across provinces, territories and national borders.²² The Ministry has defined critical infrastructure as processes, systems, facilities, technologies, networks, assets and services essential to the health, safety, security or economic well-being of citizens and the effective functioning of society.

The Plan sets out 10 different critical infrastructure sectors (e.g., food, water, transportation, health care) and sub-sectors (e.g., for transportation – surface, air, and rail). The Plan expects the providers of such infrastructure to have current emergency plans and business continuity plans. These critical infrastructure providers can be provincial government agencies (e.g., SaskPower) or private sector agencies (e.g., Enbridge Pipeline).

The Ministry has established a forum, called the Saskatchewan Critical Infrastructure Advisory Network (CIAN) (see **Figure 4**), to collectively share information regarding critical infrastructure with the ultimate objective of enhancing the resilience of critical infrastructure to various emergency events. The CIAN is composed of 118 members from 56 different organizations (about 50% private sector, 36% government [federal, provincial and municipal], and 14% law enforcement and security intelligence community). The CIAN presumes members will need to share appropriate threat, risk, situational, and response information quickly and quietly before, during, and after a crisis.²³

²⁰ Ministry of Government Relations, *Provincial Emergency Management Plan 2013-2016*, s. 7.4.

²¹ *The Emergency Planning Act*, s.13(a)(i).

²² Ministry of Government Relations, *Provincial Emergency Management Plan 2013-2016*, s. 3.3.1.

²³ Ministry of Government Relations, *Critical Infrastructure Advisory Network Strategic Plan 2013-2018*, p. 4.

The Ministry uses CIAN to keep aware of which government and private sector agencies are responsible for critical infrastructure, and the general status of each of these organizations' level of emergency preparedness. Public Safety Canada (PSC) administers a program to review business processes of organizations responsible for critical infrastructure. Under this program, CIAN members can voluntarily request a review of their critical infrastructure assessments through PSC. Through this program, the Ministry may assist and provide input to PSC during its review. As of February 2015, the Ministry has assisted PSC on 24 reviews of operators of critical infrastructure in Saskatchewan, including those of SaskEnergy and SaskPower – two of its key stakeholders.

We found the Ministry has not provided key stakeholders with guidance on how to determine which assets or facilities are critical to emergency preparedness at a provincial level. An individual organization's plans would identify infrastructure critical to the organization's operation, but such infrastructure may not be critical to emergency preparedness at the provincial level. For example, electrical power is identified as critical infrastructure in the provincial Plan. The Ministry has not provided SaskPower with guidance to help determine which power generation stations (e.g., coal power plants, hydro-electric dams) or transmission lines are critical to emergency preparedness for the province overall.

Lack of guidance may result in inconsistent decisions about what infrastructure is critical to the province overall and insufficient emergency plans of individual agencies. This may lead to ineffective deployment of resources during a provincial emergency.

3. We recommend that the Ministry of Government Relations provide key stakeholders responsible for key infrastructure in Saskatchewan with guidance to help them determine which infrastructure is critical to emergency preparedness for the province overall.

Through their involvement on the PEMC, key stakeholders are aware of when, and for what risks, they are required to prepare detailed emergency plans.

The Act dictates that the Minister of Government Relations shall approve the procedures under and the manner in which the government will respond to an emergency.²⁴ However, beyond general awareness the Ministry gains through lessons learned from activation of emergency plans and its involvement on CIAN, the Ministry does not have a process to confirm that key stakeholders have prepared emergency plans and that those plans align with the provincial Plan.

Without periodically confirming (e.g., during the comprehensive review of the provincial Plan or formal consideration during the annual lessons learned process) that key stakeholders' emergency plans exist and align with the provincial Plan, the Ministry cannot know whether key stakeholders are prepared to effectively deliver on the roles they have been assigned in the Plan during an emergency. Also, misalignment would increase the risk that key stakeholder response to emergencies will be ineffective.

²⁴ *The Emergency Planning Act*, s. 5(a)(ii).



- 4. We recommend that the Ministry of Government Relations periodically and formally confirm that emergency management plans of all key stakeholders align with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan.**

5.3.3 Resources

The Plan includes a high-level discussion of the types of resources each key provincial agency must provide in the event of an emergency. It makes those agencies responsible for determining and acquiring the necessary resources. For example, the Plan identified that the Ministry of Environment will provide specialty equipment including aircraft, radio, and pollution monitoring equipment as required. The Ministry of Environment is responsible for determining and acquiring the specific number and type of resources required.

For certain resources the Ministry provides (e.g., sandbags, sandbagging machines, flood barriers, etc.), it tracks them using an electronic asset management system (FDM). FDM sets out the quantity and location of all Ministry-owned assets and inventory. The Ministry set thresholds within the FDM to notify staff when to reorder stock of a particular resource whose quantity is low.

We found that, on an annual basis as part of its budget development process, the Ministry assessed its human resources and capital equipment resources to identify gaps, if any, in the Ministry's ability to meet its responsibilities under the Plan. It had mechanisms in place to seek additional budget resources when emergencies occurred. For example, in 2013, the Ministry requested and received additional resources for increased emergency response capacity as set out in the *12-13 Supplementary Estimates – November*.

The Ministry maintains a training plan for Ministry staff and government agency EPOs. The training plan identified the courses available, who should receive the training, and who else could benefit from receiving training (e.g., municipal leaders). The Ministry provides basic emergency management training for Emergency Planning Officers (EPO) every two years. We found that the Ministry provided emergency management training to stakeholders (provided to EPOs in 2013).

The training plan also provided a description of training available to municipalities; as previously noted, the Ministry uses its website to make these descriptions readily accessible to municipalities and the public. During 2014, the Ministry provided emergency management training to 240 individuals from 14 different communities and one First Nation.

5.3.4 Communication

The Ministry uses a public education program to promote safe practices and educate individuals on emergency preparedness and awareness. In 2014, the program included safety messages delivered to stakeholders (and posted on the Ministry website), informational materials (e.g., brochures and promotional items) provided upon request, and a resource library of materials available to stakeholders.

During an emergency, the frequency and form of communication between the Ministry and stakeholders depends on the nature of the emergency (complexity, magnitude, etc.). The Ministry has numerous communication options available that operate on different communication systems. These options include telephones, radio systems,²⁵ emails, and satellite phones. With multiple communication options available, the Ministry is always able to communicate even if one or more systems are damaged by the emergency event. For example, the Ministry can use its radio system or satellite phones if telephone and Internet access is disrupted.

When stakeholders have information pertaining to real (e.g., a forest fire is destroying property in a municipality) or imminent (e.g., a forest fire is forecasted to impact a municipality) emergencies in the province, the Plan clearly states it is their responsibility to provide that information to the Ministry to facilitate efficient and effective coordination of communication to the other stakeholders.

The Ministry informs other stakeholders of an emergency event through situation alerts to all EPOs (generally sent by email).²⁶ These alerts indicate that the Ministry is collecting information about the situation for assessment purposes and may contact stakeholders to coordinate a response to the emergency. For more significant emergency events, the Ministry holds operation calls to collect information and initiate response activities.

The Ministry has implemented standard communication processes to update key stakeholders on a daily basis during an emergency.²⁷ It uses daily situation reports for this purpose. Through communication with stakeholders, the Ministry prepares incident action plans including assigning key responsibilities.

Also, the Ministry informs the public about emergencies during regularly-scheduled media briefings. The Ministry coordinates the media briefings and involves key stakeholders so the public is provided with information about the emergency from one source. The Ministry keeps copies of situation alerts and incident action plans and prepares reports summarizing each emergency event.

We reviewed communications (i.e., situation alerts, daily situation reports, incident action plans, scheduled media briefings) from one of the four emergencies where the Plan was activated during 2014. We observed evidence of communication with stakeholders and the public as expected.

5.4 Provincial Emergency Management Plan Tested

We expected the Ministry to establish and document requirements for periodic testing of key components of the plan. It would coordinate with key stakeholders to periodically test key components of the Plan. Based on lessons learned from test exercises and past emergencies, the Ministry would update the plan as needed.

²⁵ Ministry staff use the Provincial Public Safety Telecommunications Network (PPSTN) for interoperability between agencies involved at the scene of an emergency event. The PPSTN is a public safety radio network operated in partnership by the Ministry. It provides public safety users (e.g., fire departments, volunteer search and rescue groups, emergency medical services, etc.) with interoperable radio communications that allows them to communicate with each other during times of emergency.

²⁶ If email services are not available, the Ministry would use the next most effective method available (i.e., fax, courier).

²⁷ The Ministry uses the Incident Command System for communicating information and instructions to stakeholders during an emergency. www.icscanada.ca (3 March 2015).



The Plan requires the Ministry to design, coordinate, and facilitate exercise opportunities in relation to the Plan.²⁸ It sets out exercises to complete, but does not set out how to select exercises (i.e., what type of emergency) or their frequency (e.g., annually, every three years).

Management indicated that although the Ministry did not have a documented process for when or how often to test the Plan, it envisions conducting a large-scale test exercise every three to four years with participation from all levels of government (federal, provincial, and municipal) and private sector agencies. Large-scale exercises take a long time to plan because they test multiple components of the Plan and include as many stakeholders as possible. Therefore, they are not normally held on an annual basis.

The Ministry tested the Plan in 2013 (one year after its development). It conducted a test exercise that simulated a flood in the Saskatoon area. The exercise involved many stakeholders: federal government (e.g., Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP), provincial government agencies (e.g., Saskatoon Regional Health Authority, Ministry of Health), municipalities (e.g., Cities of Saskatoon and Warman), and other organizations (e.g., Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service [STARS]).

The Ministry has not held further test exercises. However, numerous emergencies in 2014 required the activation of the Plan. The activation of the Plan for these real emergencies provides the Ministry with feedback on how well the Plan works.

Each time the Plan was activated (i.e., through test exercises or actual emergencies), the Ministry prepared a “lessons-learned” report. In this report, it documented the results, lessons learned, and recommendations.

To prepare the lessons-learned reports, the Ministry and each key stakeholder involved in responding to the emergencies conducted internal reviews (i.e., at their own agency) to assess the emergency response. Ministry staff involved in the emergency response discussed where improvements could be made. The Ministry and key stakeholders discussed the internal review results at the EOAC. The Ministry drafted a lessons-learned report based on the EOAC’s assessment of overall response and shared the final report with EOAC members.

We reviewed lessons-learned reports from the past three years. Examples of lessons learned from 2014 emergencies included the need to: standardize implementation of the Incident Command Structure (i.e., command structure used during emergency response) across government, review protocols to ensure staff safety during emergencies, and review protocols for deploying specialized equipment during events where multiple communities are impacted. In these reports, the Ministry had not identified any specific lessons learned that resulted in required amendments to the provincial Plan or to key stakeholders’ emergency plans. At December 2014, the Ministry was incorporating lessons learned from 2014 emergencies into its *2015 Operational Plan*.

Each key stakeholder has the responsibility under the Plan to determine when and how often their individual emergency plan needs to be tested. The Ministry’s guidance to key stakeholders recommends they test their plan annually.

²⁸ Ministry of Government Relations, *Provincial Emergency Management Plan 2013-2016*, s. 7.3.

We found key stakeholders participated in the “lessons learned” process. This process provided these stakeholders with some information on the effectiveness of the individual agency emergency plans.

6.0 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

All-Hazards Emergency Management Planning – An approach that recognizes that the actions required to mitigate the effects of emergencies are essentially the same, irrespective of the nature of the event, thereby permitting an optimization of scarce planning, response and support resources. The intention of all-hazards generic emergency planning is to employ generic methodologies, modified as necessary by particular circumstances. All-hazards incorporates natural and man-made hazards threats including traditional emergency management events such as flooding and industrial accidents, as well as national security events such as terrorism and cyber events. (*Public Safety Canada, Emergency Management Planning Guide*)

Emergency – A present or imminent event, including information technology incidents, that requires prompt coordination of actions to protect the health, safety or welfare of people, or to limit damage to assets or the environment. (*Public Safety Canada, Emergency Management Planning Guide*)

Hazard – A hazard is a potentially damaging physical event, phenomenon or human activity that may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation. (*Public Safety Canada, Emergency Management Planning Guide*)

Threat – The presence of a hazard and an exposure pathway; threats may be natural or human-induced, either accidental or intentional. (*Public Safety Canada, Emergency Management Planning Guide*)

Risk – Threat that a hazard will adversely affect an organization’s ability to achieve its business objectives and execute its strategies successfully. (*Provincial Emergency Management Plan*)

7.0 EXHIBITS

Exhibit 7.1 – Government Agencies Represented on Provincial Emergency Management Committee (PEMC) at December 2014

<p>Ministries: Agriculture Central Services</p> <p>Environment Health Highways and Infrastructure Finance</p> <p>Government Relations* Justice Public Service Commission</p> <p>Social Services</p>	<p>Crown Corporations: SaskEnergy/Transgas SaskPower SaskTel</p> <p>Other: Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan Water Security Agency</p>
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Source: Ministry of Government Relations, *Provincial Emergency Management Plan 2013-2016*, s. 2.5.1.3.

*The Chief of Emergency Management is the chair of the PEMC.

Bolded agencies are key stakeholders for the *Provincial Emergency Management Plan*.



Exhibit 7.2—Government Agencies Represented on Emergency Operations Advisory Committee (EOAC) at December 2014

<p>Ministries: Advanced Education Agriculture Central Services Economy Education Environment Executive Council Finance Health Highways and Infrastructure Government Relations* Justice Labour Relations and Workplace Safety Parks, Culture and Sport Public Service Commission Social Services</p> <p>Other: Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Department of National Defence Canada Public Safety Canada</p>	<p>Crown Corporations: Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan SaskEnergy Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Saskatchewan Government Insurance SaskPower SaskTel Saskatchewan Transportation Company SaskWater Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation</p> <p>Treasury Board Government Agencies: Apprenticeship & Trade Certification Commission eHealth Saskatchewan Legal Aid Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency Saskatchewan Arts Board Saskatchewan Research Council Water Security Agency Workers Compensation Board</p>
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Source: Ministry of Government Relations records January 2015.

*Ministry of Government Relations staff co-chair the EOAC.

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