2024 Jasper Wildfire Complex Municipal After-Action Review

Lessons learned from the joint efforts by the Municipality of Jasper and other supporting agencies during the wildfire incident



Prepared for the Municipality of Jasper by:

Satya Inc.
Respond Planning & Communications Inc.

July 2025





CONTENTS

03 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

11 INTRODUCTION

13 AFTER-ACTION REVIEW METHODOLOGY

17 INCIDENT DESCRIPTION

20 INCIDENT CHRONOLOGY

24 INCIDENT RESPONSE & UNIFIED COMMAND

28 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

33 STRENGTHS OF THE RESPONSE

36 THEMES & RECOMMENDATIONS

47 GLOSSARY

48 APPENDICES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to Parks Canada for the photographs used throughout the After-Action Review.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the summer of 2024, Jasper National Park faced its most devastating wildfire in a century. The fire destroyed 32% of structures within the Municipality of Jasper, including over 800 housing units, and disrupted the lives of thousands of residents and visitors. The scale and complexity of the wildfire required an exceptional level of coordination between responding agencies. The Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada implemented a Unified Command structure that successfully brought together municipal, provincial, and federal partners to coordinate resources, streamline decision-making, and execute a cohesive response.

This response demonstrated remarkable strengths in several areas. Emergency teams showcased swift mobilization, deploying personnel and resources promptly to safeguard the community and infrastructure. The coordination between local emergency responders and Parks Canada exemplified effective collaboration, ensuring a unified approach to the crisis. Safety was prioritized through timely evacuations and protective measures, highlighting a commitment to preserving lives. Additionally, the use of the Incident Command System (ICS) enabled adaptive management and efficient allocation of resources. These strengths collectively illustrated resilience and adaptability in addressing the wildfire's challenges.

The purpose of this After-Action Review is to evaluate the collective response to the 2024 Jasper Wildfire Complex, involving the Municipality of Jasper, Parks Canada, and other supporting agencies. The insights and recommendations focus on the performance of the entire Incident Management Team (IMT), ensuring that lessons learned benefit all participants. While the Municipality of Jasper should consider these findings, the recommendations and the emphasis is on their broader relevance to incoming agencies, other communities, province-wide systems, and supporting effective collaboration during future responses.

It is not intended to ascribe blame; rather, it identifies gaps, overlaps, and opportunities for improvement to ultimately support increased community resilience, bolster the capacity and capabilities of the groups involved in the incident, and bring light to issues that may warrant additional exploration in future emergency planning efforts.

SCOPE

Figure 1 illustrates the scope of the review. The scope of this review includes:

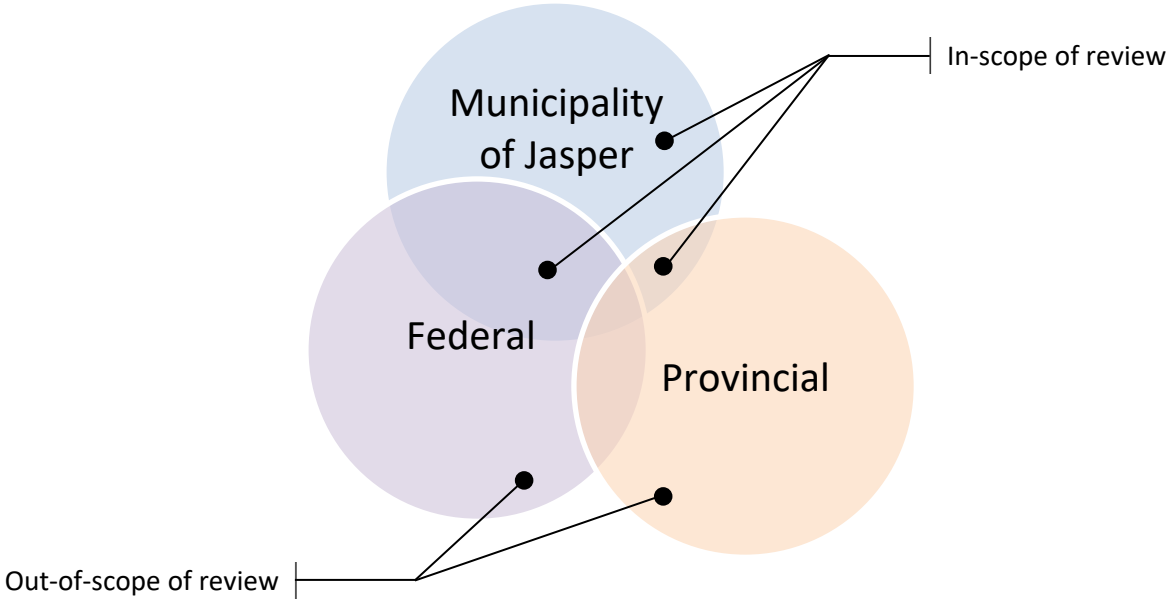
- Emergency plans related to wildfire, evacuation, and incident management in place for the Municipality of Jasper.
- Inter-agency coordination, including the Unified Command model and delineation of roles and responsibilities between jurisdictions.
- Incident management, Incident Command Post, and Emergency Coordination Centre resource allocation.

This review does not include:

- Assessment of the effectiveness of Parks Canada's response, other than where it intersected in the Unified Command structure for managing the incident within the Municipality of Jasper.
- Review of the role of the Province of Alberta or its ministries in the response to, or recovery from, the incident, other than where it intersected in the Unified Command structure for managing the incident within the Municipality of Jasper.
- Review of the recovery efforts undertaken within the Municipality of Jasper by any level of government.

Figure 1: After-Action Review scope

The diagram illustrates the scope of the review, which includes areas of municipal responsibility as well as where provincial and federal agencies intersected with the Unified Command structure.



METHODOLOGY

Between February and March 2025, independent emergency management consultants were engaged to work with response personnel to assess the effectiveness of the Jasper Wildfire Complex incident management and identify both areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. It was a multi-faceted process that included the following components:

- A review of the **seven key emergency management plans** of the Municipality of Jasper to assess the effectiveness of the Municipality's plans in clearly outlining incident management practices, roles, and responsibilities related to the wildfire response.
- **Two tailored online surveys** completed by 138 firefighters and 115 Incident Management Team (IMT) members to provide input on a range of pre-, on-, and post-deployment issues.
- A **full-day, in-person workshop** attended by 68 individuals from agencies and organizations across all levels of government and the private sector directly involved in the response to the wildfire to provide feedback on the actions taken and lessons learned.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSE STRENGTHS

Through analysis of survey responses, workshop feedback, and document review, several strengths emerged that contributed to the effectiveness of the wildfire response. These strengths highlight areas of capability, leadership, and preparedness that supported the protection of life, property, and critical services throughout the incident. Below is a summary of the strengths identified by participants throughout the input process, with detailed explanations to follow later in the report.

1. **Effective fire management and mitigation:** Despite severe conditions and rapid-fire progression, responders successfully protected 68% of the townsite and all critical infrastructure. This outcome was enabled by sound operational tactics, early deployment of structure protection resources, and the inclusion of local technical experts in fire operations.

2. **Strong incident leadership and adaptability:** The rapid activation of Unified Command and formal declaration of a State of Local Emergency allowed for decisive, coordinated action. The IMT demonstrated flexibility and maintained operational continuity, even while relocating from Jasper to Hinton under deteriorating conditions.

3. **High-functioning interagency collaboration:** Mutual aid agreements and strong working relationships enabled strong operability of municipal, provincial, federal, and non-governmental

partners. Pre-established protocols with Parks Canada and the quick arrival of external support teams reinforced capacity and ensured a unified response.

4. **People-driven success and operational resilience:** Responders across all roles showed professionalism, dedication, and adaptability in an unprecedented crisis. Emergency Social Services (ESS), 911/Dispatch, and municipal staff pivoted rapidly to maintain operations under duress, supporting one of the largest evacuations in the region's history.

5. **Preparedness and joint training impact:** Years of planning, interagency exercises, and scenario-based training, particularly between the Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada, built the foundations for a coordinated response. Public compliance with evacuation orders, and high levels of engagement in the post-incident review process, demonstrated the value of ongoing investment in emergency preparedness and community resilience.

SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

Through a collective examination and analysis of the results of the three components of the review, response personnel consistently identified ten key themes that highlight both strengths and opportunities for improvement in incident management.

1. **Strengthening Unified Command and Incident Management Teams:** Support for the use of Unified Command was overwhelmingly positive; however, gaps in predefined triggers for its use, unclear agency roles within the IMT structure, and communication deficiencies, particularly involving Jasper 911/Dispatch, ESS, and re-entry planning, highlighted the need for improved clarity and integration in future emergency response efforts

2. **Formalizing external agency representation:** The expertise and resources of external agencies were identified as valuable assets in the response, and more formal guidance for these representatives will help ensure they are better leveraged and engaged in future responses.

3. **Delineating jurisdictions and authorities:** While the Unified Command structure between the Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada was effective, provincial involvement introduced complexity due to uncertain decision-making authority and jurisdictional overlap, which requires clarification for effective, efficient emergency planning and response.

4. **Advancing fire operational effectiveness:** While fire planning and operations resulted in saving 68% of the townsite structures and all critical infrastructure, there are opportunities for additional focus on planning for different ignition sources and pre-engineering of facilities that provide essential community services.

5. **Optimizing communication and resource planning:** Communication and resource challenges during the response, ranging from delays in tactical updates and uncoordinated firefighting efforts to shortages in essential tools, logistical support, and safety equipment, highlight the need for improved information flow, integration between response teams, and proactive resource management to enhance operational effectiveness and responder well-being.

6. **Expanding planning, training, and exercises:** Joint planning and exercises with Parks Canada before the wildfire contributed significantly to the success of the incident management, highlighting the need for more opportunities for staff and partners to receive training and prepare for worst-case scenarios.

7. **Refining municipal and community preparedness and resilience:** The Municipality's emergency preparedness efforts contributed to the incident's outcome, and growing these efforts through enhanced community resilience, broadened mutual aid agreements, and better guidelines for emergency responders during mandatory evacuations will further strengthen community readiness.

8. **Extending supports for mental health and well-being:** The psychological toll of the wildfire required the many mental health resources provided, and enhanced mental health support systems during and following these incidents remain essential for supporting responders.

9. **Enhancing demobilization and post-deployment support:** Following such an unprecedented event in the area, responders and agencies assisting in the response would benefit from continued support and learning immediately following the incident and in the weeks and months afterward.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Through analysis of the feedback and themes resulting from the plans review, surveys, and workshop, 27 recommendations were identified to further strengthen emergency management within the Municipality of Jasper.

1. **Clear guidelines regarding integration of critical services:** Establish clear guidelines within the Municipal Emergency Plan (MEP) that define the responsibilities and reporting structure of key municipal services (including ESS) and Parks Canada services (including 911/Dispatch) within the IMT.

2. **Use of Unified Command:** Within the MEP, include guidelines on the use of, and triggers for, employing a Unified Command structure during incidents to ensure coordinated and effective response efforts.

3. **Re-entry planning:** Develop a comprehensive re-entry plan that outlines critical steps, trigger points, resources, and agency roles to expedite decision-making and facilitate the return of residents and businesses.

4. **Framework for engagement:** Create a framework for the engagement and participation of external agencies in incident response. This should include guidelines for their roles, responsibilities, and integration into the IMT and should be incorporated into the MEP.

5. **Multi-agency scenario-based ICS training:** Conduct regular, multi-agency training sessions that focus on ICS structure, role responsibilities, and real-time coordination exercises to improve cross-agency collaboration and response efficiency.

6. **Clarify provincial expectations and jurisdictional concerns:** Working from existing legislation and authorities, meet with Parks Canada, and appropriate Government of Canada and Province of Alberta representatives to discuss and resolve challenges identified during the wildfire, clarifying pertinent provincial and federal agency jurisdictions and responsibilities within the MEP.

7. **Advocate for resource optimization and expanded standardized training:** Advocate to the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) for:

    a. Review of Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre resource allocation processes to enhance dependability and reliability.

    b. Implementation of a resource deployment pre-alerting system to support more rapid response and a robust resource tracking system that allows for real-time updates on the availability and location of resources.

c. Bolstering education and awareness of ICS and positional training across all responding organizations, to enhance interoperability and consistency during incidents.

8. **Equipment compatibility:** Ensure that all incoming structural fire crews are equipped with compatible tools to use local resources effectively.

9. **Comprehensive fire planning:** Review fire plans to ensure they address various modes of fire ignition, including multiple, simultaneous, and widespread ember showers, and integrate these plans into the overall operational strategy.

10. **Pre-engineering of critical infrastructure:** Integrate critical infrastructure into the MEP and encourage owners of critical infrastructure to employ pre-engineering and pre-planning to improve fire protection and enhance community resilience to fire spread.

11. **Improved briefing protocols:** Enhance, and train on, briefing protocols to ensure that all responders, including both structural and wildland firefighting operations, clearly understand incident action plans and operational objectives. Use standardized formats and checklists.

12. **Set expectations for incoming resources:** Work with the AEMA and incident Liaison Officers to determine what guidance can be provided to incoming teams and individuals to ensure they arrive with the necessary resources and the appropriate level of self-sufficiency to sustain themselves for a 72-hour period.

13. **Conduct capability planning:** To facilitate rapid deployment of additional resources to an incident, confirm the provincial resource deployment process and complete a wildfire resource assessment that identifies existing resources, including mutual aid capabilities, and what will be required for a worst-case scenario to create a proactive resourcing plan to drive resource requests in the initial stages of an incident.

14. **Incorporate worst-case scenario planning:** Review Appendix IV of the Jasper Evacuation Plan to determine if modifications are required to ensure worst-case scenario planning is included, to ensure resources and training are geared toward larger incidents.

15. **Strengthen municipal emergency response readiness:** Establish clear activation protocols for the Incident Command Post (ICP) and Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) within the MEP and integrate IMT responsibilities into relevant staff job descriptions supported by appropriate training and mentorship.

16. **Refine evacuation planning:** Develop mutual aid or pre-established agreements with other jurisdictions in both Alberta and British Columbia to house evacuees and identify non-fire personnel resources to execute door-to-door evacuation notification.

17. **Advocate for revised Building Code:** Lobby provincial and national partners to review and update building codes to require housing materials that reduce fire spread, considering both flame fronts and ember showers.

18. **Mandate FireSmart initiatives:** Explore the possibility of developing a bylaw requiring local industry and homeowners to implement FireSmart principles and practices and evaluate the potential to provide supports or incentives to increase participation.

19. **Establish clear evacuation protocols and contingency plans for emergency personnel:** Create formal policies and evacuation protocols for emergency personnel, including exemption criteria, contingency plans, and alternative work locations and staffing strategies, to ensure continuity of critical functions like 911/Dispatch, IMT, municipal governance, and emergency operations during municipal evacuations.

20. **Clearly and frequently communicate available mental health supports:** Continue to provide immediate access to counselling services in the field and regularly communicate how to obtain these services to support responders' mental health during deployment. Promote the importance of ongoing mental health care by encouraging responding agencies to extend support for deployed members beyond their activation period.

21. **Leverage peer support networks:** Promote the utilization of existing peer support networks from all involved frontline agencies to offer emotional support and stress management resources for responders.

22. **Devise structured demobilization planning:** Develop clear and structured demobilization protocols within the MEP that include positional responsibilities and efficient transportation logistics to ensure a smooth transition for responders.

23. **Build continuous improvement into planning:** Formalize the requirement for debriefing and after-action reviews following incidents into the MEP to ensure platforms are in place for feedback and reflection.

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2024, Jasper National Park faced its most devastating wildfire in a century, leaving an indelible mark on the community and surrounding natural landscapes. The Municipality of Jasper, home to approximately 5,000 year-round residents and a hub for more than 2 million annual visitors, endured unprecedented challenges as the wildfire destroyed 32% of its structures and disrupted the lives of thousands[1]. This After-Action Review provides a comprehensive examination of the wildfire response, offering insights into the strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement in emergency management. By examining the complexities of inter-agency coordination, resource allocation, and incident management, this review aims to bolster community resilience and prepare Jasper for future emergencies.

PURPOSE

The purpose of an After-Action Review is to analyze and reflect on the collective response to an incident, identifying successes, challenges, and areas for improvement to enhance future efforts. For the 2024 wildfire response, it is important to recognize that the Incident Management Team (IMT) was comprised of both representatives from the Municipality of Jasper and personnel from other external agencies, including Parks Canada's National IMT and Canada Task Force 2. Therefore, the themes and recommendations emerging from this review are designed to address the performance of the entire team and resources involved, not solely the Municipality of Jasper. While it is essential for the Municipality to consider the applicability of these recommendations to its operations, a broader focus should be placed on their relevance to the incoming agencies and steps needed to support these partners in performing effectively during future incidents. This approach ensures that lessons learned benefit the entire response framework and contribute to improved collaboration and outcomes across all agencies involved.

It is not intended to ascribe blame; rather, it identifies gaps, overlaps, and opportunities for improvement to ultimately support increased community resilience, bolster the capacity and capabilities of the groups involved in the incident, and bring light to issues that may warrant additional exploration in future emergency planning efforts.

[1] Municipality of Jasper (2025). *Wildfire Recovery Information.* https://jasper-alberta.ca/p/jasperwildfire

The review also provides a forum for those involved in the response to provide their expertise, perspective, and voice to inform recommendations and support continuous improvement.

SCOPE

The scope of this review includes:

- Emergency plans related to wildfire, evacuation, and incident management in place for the Municipality of Jasper.
- Inter-agency coordination, including the Unified Command model and delineation of roles and responsibilities between jurisdictions.
- Incident management, Incident Command Post, and Emergency Coordination Centre resource allocation.

This review does not include:

- Assessment of the effectiveness of Parks Canada's response, other than where it intersected in the Unified Command structure for managing the incident within the Municipality of Jasper.
- Review of the role of the Province of Alberta or its ministries in the response to, or recovery from, the incident, other than where it intersected in the Unified Command structure for managing the incident within the Municipality of Jasper.
- Review of the recovery efforts undertaken within the Municipality of Jasper by any level of government.



AFTER-ACTION REVIEW METHODOLOGY

Between February and March 2025, independent emergency management consultants undertook a systematic approach to evaluate the effectiveness of the Jasper Wildfire Complex incident management. This review considered the performance of all responding agencies, encompassing both the Municipality of Jasper and external partners, to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement across the entire collaborative response effort. It was a multi-faceted process that included data collection through documentation reviews and engagement of personnel involved in the incident response:

- Emergency management plan review
- Qualitative surveys
- Participant engagement workshop

The results of the plan review and responses from the engagements were analyzed to identify recurring themes, trends, and actionable insights. This included:

- Highlighting strengths, such as effective strategies and practices that contributed to success.
- Identifying gaps and challenges, such as resource constraints or communication breakdowns.
- Extracting lessons learned to improve future wildfire response efforts.

To encourage transparency and openness in the process, survey and workshop responses were confidential, and only aggregate results are presented to prevent the identification of specific individuals.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

The plan review focused on an assessment of the Municipality of Jasper's emergency management plans as they related specifically to the 2024 wildfire response.

Purpose. The purpose of the review was to assess the effectiveness of the Municipality's plans in clearly outlining incident management practices, roles, and responsibilities related to the wildfire response. It examined whether the plans adequately addressed common issues that were identified through survey and workshop feedback from the agencies and individuals involved in the wildfire response.

Scope. The review did not encompass the entirety of the Municipality's emergency management plans or overall improvements. Instead, it concentrated on aspects directly impacting or intersecting with the wildfire response.

Document review. The primary guiding documents and plans pertinent to wildfire emergency response in the Municipality of Jasper were reviewed to evaluate their effectiveness and identify potential areas for improvement. These included:

1. Municipality of Jasper Emergency Management Bylaw (June 2022)
2. Municipality of Jasper Municipal Emergency Plan (September 2023)
3. Municipality of Jasper Emergency Social Services Plan (December 2023)
4. Municipality of Jasper Emergency Communications Plan (August 2018)
5. Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada Joint Emergency Information Protocol (June 2022)
6. Municipality of Jasper and Jasper National Park Jasper Evacuation Plan (2022)
7. Municipality of Jasper Structure Protection Pre-Plan (2023)

Assessment criteria. The assessment criteria used to evaluate plan effectiveness was extrapolated from feedback received from individuals involved in the response and alignment with key components of ICS, the Alberta Emergency Plan (2022), and the Alberta Incident Management System (2024). These criteria included:

- Identification of the agencies, organizations, and services expected to be involved in response and recovery.
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities for involved agencies, organizations, and services.
- Clarity of governance and operational structures to be used in response and recovery.
- Scalability considerations, including triggers and actions to support escalating levels of an incident and planning for accessing additional resourcing.

Gap identification. The assessment identified gaps and areas for improvement in the plans. Where improvements to the Municipality's plans could address issues brought forward through the surveys and workshop, they are identified as recommendations in this report.

QUALITATIVE SURVEYS

The survey methodology centered on the implementation of two targeted online surveys, tailored to capture the unique experiences and perceptions of key stakeholders based on their roles during the wildfire response. Details regarding the survey methodology may be found in Appendix A.

The firefighter survey received 138 responses, while the IMT survey collected data from 115 participants.



Key topics and areas of inquiry. The survey questions explored critical aspects of the wildfire response, such as:

- **Command structures:** Evaluated the effectiveness of leadership and organizational frameworks.
- **Resource allocation:** Assessed the adequacy of personnel, equipment, and logistical support.
- **Communication channels:** Measured the clarity and reliability of internal and external communication systems.
- **Safety protocols:** Reviewed the implementation of safety measures and the availability of mental health resources.
- **Demobilization processes:** Examined the efficiency of transition procedures post-deployment.

PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP

The workshop methodology was designed to facilitate comprehensive in-person feedback and insights from agencies and individuals involved in the wildfire response. Details regarding the workshop methodology can be found in Appendix A, and a list of attending organizations may be found in Appendix B.

Key topics and areas of inquiry. The four sessions used prompting questions to support the groups in their discussions and exploration of the response:

1. What was planned?
    - What were our objectives or intended outcomes?
    - What was the plan, or action plan, and what assumptions did we make?
    - What roles and responsibilities were assigned?

2. What happened?

    - What went according to plan?
    - What challenges or surprises did we encounter?
    - Were there any deviations from the expected process?

3. Why did it happen?

    - What factors contributed to the successes or challenges?
    - Were there any gaps in communication resources or decision-making?
    - How did team dynamics, technology, or external factors impact the outcome?

4. What did we learn?

    - What best practices should we continue?
    - What adjustments or improvements should we make?
    - How can we be better prepared for similar situations in the future?

By examining the key themes emerging from both the workshop sessions and surveys, the findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the operational performance and opportunities for enhancing incident management in the future.

INCIDENT DESCRIPTION

The 2024 Jasper Wildfire Complex became the largest wildfire recorded in Jasper National Park in a century, significantly impacting the region and requiring extensive coordination among agencies. At the time of the incident, it was one of 149 wildfires burning across Alberta.[2]

The wildfires were a catastrophic event that tested the resilience of the community, the preparedness of emergency services, and the effectiveness of wildfire management strategies. This review provides an account of the incident, focusing on the timeline, response efforts by the Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada, and the phases before the wildfire impacted the municipality (pre-impingement), during the wildfire's impact on the municipality (impingement), and after the fires within the municipality were extinguished (post-impingement).

INCIDENT SUMMARY

The 2024 Jasper Wildfire Complex began on July 22 during record dry fuel conditions, creating a highly flammable fuel landscape throughout Jasper National Park. Multiple fires ignited in quick succession at critical locations, including near the Jasper Transfer Station north of the Jasper townsite, three locations south of the Jasper townsite near Kerkeslin Campground, and close to Athabasca Falls. Fueled by strong, gusting winds, the south fires merged into a massive and fast-moving wildfire complex within the first 12 hours, spreading uncontrollably across the rugged terrain of Jasper National Park.

Four hours after ignition, the wildfires had burned over 3,000 hectares of forest, driven primarily by strong winds gusting to over 80 km/h. The north fire and combined southern wildfire complex along with dry conditions presented an immense threat to the town of Jasper and key infrastructure, including roads, utilities, and tourism facilities. On July 24, internal fire-generated winds acted as force multipliers, propelling the fire's rapid growth toward town. Figure 1 illustrates the fire progression between July 22 and August 14, 2024.

Despite the unprecedented severity of the wildfire, prior training and preparedness efforts by the Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada played a crucial role in the emergency response. In the years leading up to the 2024 fire season, both agencies conducted joint wildfire exercises, evacuation drills, and interagency coordination simulations to enhance response capabilities. These efforts included

[2] Frew, N. (2024, July 27). *Jasper officials release map, list of all structures destroyed by wildfire*. CBC News.

scenario-based training on Unified Command, rapid evacuations, emergency sheltering, and resource mobilization in a wildland-urban interface event. While the scale of the actual wildfire far exceeded previous training scenarios, these exercises proved invaluable in coordinating a swift and effective response under extreme conditions.

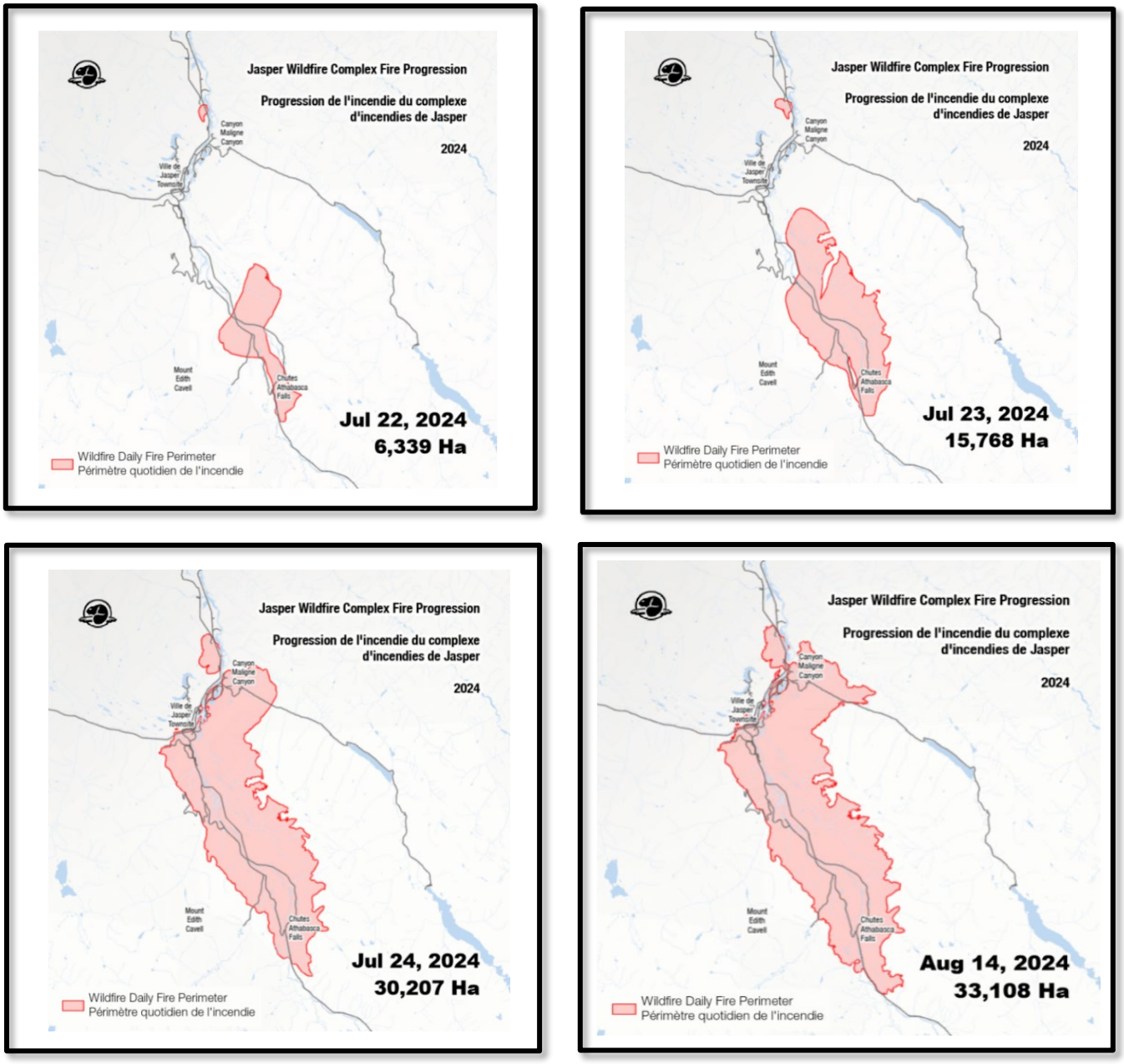
One of the most significant challenges in managing the wildfire was the unpredictability of its behaviour. Initial fire spread models and forecasts predicted that the wildfire would reach the townsite by Friday, July 26, potentially with some rainfall, both allowing for critical mitigation and preparedness measures to be implemented over several days. However, rapidly changing conditions, including significant overnight fire growth, strong winds on July 22 and 23, and convective fire growth on July 24, accelerated the fire's progression significantly. As a result, the wildfire reached the outskirts of Jasper 46 hours after igniting on Wednesday, July 24, catching responders in a race against time to implement emergency measures. This rapid escalation underscored the limitations of fire modelling in extreme conditions and highlighted the need for adaptive response strategies in an increasingly volatile wildfire environment.

These wildfires inflicted widespread and severe impacts across the landscape. Vast swaths of wilderness, iconic to Jasper National Park, were reduced to ashes, resulting in the loss of critical wildlife habitats and disrupting ecosystems. While all critical infrastructure within the town was saved, some key infrastructure, including power lines and roadways, sustained varying degrees of damage, further compounding the challenges for emergency responders.

In the face of this escalating crisis, approximately 25,000 residents and visitors were forced to evacuate along a single highway exit corridor, a coordinated effort marking one of the largest and most complex evacuations in the region's history. The evacuations served as a stark reminder of the fire's severity, as municipal authorities and Parks Canada collaborated on an emergency response plan that balanced public safety with the logistics of managing a mass exodus.

Despite the mobilization of significant firefighting resources, the wildfires continued to spread toward the townsite. The interplay of dry fuels, topographical challenges, and unpredictable wind patterns hindered containment efforts, underscoring the sheer intensity and complexity of the wildfire event.

Figure 1: Jasper Wildfire Complex fire progression[3]



[3] Shepherd, L. (2025, February). *Jasper 2024 Wildfire Complex Fire Progression*. *Jasper Wildfire Complex Debrief Workshop*. Jasper; Alberta.

INCIDENT CHRONOLOGY

The incident timeline provided below summarizes key milestones and decision points of the incident but does not cover every decision or aspect of the event. A comprehensive timeline produced by the Municipality of Jasper outlining detailed actions can be found in Appendix C. The timeline below is divided into three sections: pre-impingement, impingement, and post-impingement. Where times were important to mark the rapidity or escalation of the event, they are noted.

PRE-IMPINGEMENT PHASE

JULY 10, 2024

- The fire danger rating in Jasper National Park was officially declared "extreme" due to a combination of dry conditions, high temperatures, and prolonged drought.

JULY 12, 2024

- In response to the heightened risk, a fire ban was implemented across the park. Public warnings were issued, urging caution to prevent human-caused ignition.

JULY 22, 2024

19:02
- A north fire ignited near the Jasper Transfer Station.

19:05
- Within a six-minute period, three wildfires broke out to the south, including one near Kerkeslin Campground.

19:30
- Strong winds rapidly merged the south fires into a single, fast-moving wildfire complex that spread uncontrollably across the rugged terrain.
- The Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada issued evacuation alerts and began mobilizing firefighting resources, marking the official transition to emergency response efforts.
- An evacuation alert was issued for the Municipality of Jasper. Residents and visitors were advised to prepare for imminent evacuation.

20:08
- The Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada activated a Unified Command structure to coordinate evacuation efforts.

21:40
- The Emergency Advisory Committee of the Municipality of Jasper declared a State of Local Emergency, signed by the Deputy Mayor and one councillor.

21:59
- An evacuation order was formally issued, prompting the evacuation of over 25,000 residents and visitors. The operation was executed efficiently, with most evacuees safely relocated within 6 hours.

- Firefighting resources, including air tankers, structure protection crews, and hundreds of firefighters, were deployed. Despite these efforts, the fire complex grew uncontrollably due to strong atmospheric winds that uprooted trees and propelled embers up to a kilometer ahead of the fire.

Overnight

- Structural protection sprinklers were strategically deployed to safeguard critical infrastructure.

JULY 23, 2024

- Evacuations continued for high-risk areas, including Jasper National Park's backcountry.
- Access control measures were implemented to restrict entry into affected zones.
- Stabilization efforts focused on power, radio, and water infrastructure to support ongoing operations.
- Additional structural protection equipment, including sprinklers, were strategically deployed to safeguard the west town perimeter.
- High-volume wet lines were established south and west of the town to create a control line.
- Additional firefighting resources were ordered as the situation deteriorated. By evening, worsening conditions prompted some Incident Management Team (IMT) staff and assisting agencies to self-evacuate.
- Council met daily with municipal Administration for briefings and updates, share concerns from the community, and provide input on the response priorities.

JULY 24, 2024

- Parks Canada’s National IMT finalizes preparations to transition to on-site management.
- Escalating fire activity necessitated the relocation of IMT staff and Jasper 911/Dispatch out of town prior to impingement.

17:40

- The South fire column collapses.
- The fire reaches the outskirts of Jasper, threatening critical infrastructure. Under intense pressure, teams successfully protect key facilities, such as the town's water treatment plant and power lines.

IMPINGEMENT PHASE

18:00

- First reports of structure fires emerged as embers landed on and near vulnerable structures. Initial impacts were reported in the industrial area, along Sleepy Hollow Road, and in the Cabin Creek West sections of town.

18:30
- The Cabin Creek West neighbourhood is fully involved in fire.
- Fire spotting accelerated eastward and northward.

19:00
- Flames spread into the center of town including the central business district.

Overnight
- Structural fire suppression continued throughout the night.

JULY 25, 2024

- Canada Task Force 2 arrived and was assigned authority to represent the Municipality of Jasper at the Incident Command Post in Hinton.
- Efforts to protect critical infrastructure continued, while values at risk across Jasper National Park were assessed and prioritized.
- Emergency Social Services worked to address the ongoing needs of displaced residents and visitors.
- A rapid damage assessment was conducted, and public communications were increased to provide transparent updates on the situation.

JULY 26, 2024

- Results of a rapid damage assessment were communicated to the public, confirming that 358 of the 1,113 structures in the Jasper townsite had been destroyed.
- An aerial survey confirmed that the fire perimeter had expanded to 32,000 hectares, solidifying its status as the largest wildfire in Jasper National Park in over a century.

JULY 27, 2024

- Structural hot spots in the town were extinguished to prevent rekindling.

POST-IMPINGEMENT & RE-ENTRY PHASE

JULY 28, 2024

- Media tours were conducted to provide transparency and allow journalists to witness the extent of the damage firsthand.

JULY 29, 2024

- Jasper Municipal Council reviewed and approved re-entry criteria, prioritizing safety, stability of infrastructure, and air quality as primary considerations.

JULY 31, 2024

- Commercial vehicle access was restored on Highway 16, facilitating essential services and logistics.

AUGUST 3, 2024

- Crews began removing hazardous trees and installing perimeter fencing around destroyed structures to secure the affected areas.
- Wildland Firefighter Morgan Kitchen was fatally struck by a falling tree while on duty.

AUGUST 6, 2024

- Residents participated in bus tours organized to view the damage and begin the process of emotional recovery.

AUGUST 9, 2024

- Highway 16 was fully reopened, restoring critical connectivity to the region.

AUGUST 12, 2024

- The northwest fire perimeter reached 99% containment. Re-entry plans for displaced residents were announced.

AUGUST 13, 2024

- Jasper Municipal Council held a Special Meeting to resume municipal governance functions as per the previous meeting schedule to ensure timely decision making.

AUGUST 16, 2024

- Residents and business operators began returning to Jasper under strict guidelines to ensure safety. Support services included mental health resources and gas relighting assistance.

AUGUST 17, 2024

- The evacuation alert was lifted, and all traffic resumed on Highway 16.

AUGUST 20, 2024

- Unified Command operations formally concluded, marking the end of the emergency response phase.

INCIDENT RESPONSE & UNIFIED COMMAND

The response to the Jasper Wildfire Complex was a coordinated effort between the Municipality of Jasper, Parks Canada, and other provincial and federal agencies, operating under a Unified Command structure led by the Municipality and Parks Canada. This unified approach was pre-planned and practiced in training exercises before the event, on the belief that it would streamline decision-making and resource allocation, ensuring an efficient and cohesive response to the crisis.

In the Incident Command System, Unified Command brings together Incident Commanders from multiple jurisdictions or agencies to operate within a single, coordinated command structure.[4] These designated leaders, appointed by their respective authorities, collaboratively establish incident objectives, strategies, plans, and priorities. By working in unison, they ensure integrated operations and optimal resource utilization throughout the response.

MUNICIPALITY OF JASPER

The Municipality of Jasper took on a pivotal role in protecting its residents, visitors, and critical infrastructure. Its actions included the following:

1. **Evacuations and emergency shelters**

    - The Municipality initiated an evacuation, requiring all members of the public within the town and surrounding area to evacuate. Over 25,000 residents and visitors were evacuated, making this one of the largest evacuations in the region's history.
    - Emergency shelters and reception centers were established in nearby municipalities, providing food, water, medical care, and temporary housing for evacuees. Transportation, including shuttle buses and other public transport options, was arranged for individuals without access to private vehicles.

2. **Structural and critical infrastructure firefighting**

    - Local emergency responders, alongside mutual aid from neighboring municipalities, were deployed to safeguard critical infrastructure such as hospitals, power substations, and water treatment facilities.

[4] ICS Canada (2004*). I-300 Intermediate Incident Command System – ICS for expanding Incidents*. https://icscanada.ca/

- Structural protection units, including sprinkler systems, were set up to shield key buildings and areas.

3. **Resource coordination**

    - The Municipality collaborated with provincial agencies and neighboring jurisdictions to secure additional firefighting personnel, equipment, and logistical support.
    - Jasper's Incident Management Team (IMT) worked within the Unified Command structure to provide situational updates, request reinforcements, and coordinate response efforts.

4. **Community communication**

    - Regular updates were provided to the public through various communication channels, including social media, press briefings, and an emergency notification system.
    - Mental health and counselling services were offered to evacuees and residents affected by the crisis.

5. **Municipal governance**
    - The Emergency Advisory Committee was responsible for the declaration, renewal and termination of the State of Local Emergency.
    - Elected officials maintained regular Council member duties and served as important connection points to identify community needs.
    - The Mayor was the designated spokesperson for the Municipality.

PARKS CANADA

As the primary authority responsible for managing the wildfire within Jasper National Park, Parks Canada led an aggressive response to contain the wildfire and minimize its community and ecological impact. Their efforts included:

1. **Wildland firefighting**

    - Parks Canada mobilized both Type 1 (highly trained, specialized crews) and Type 2 (general wildland crews) firefighters to strategic locations around the wildfire perimeter.
    - Aerial firefighting assets, including air tankers and water bombers, were deployed to conduct precision drops on the most active fire fronts. These aircraft played a critical role in slowing the fire's progression.

2. **Ignition and firebreak strategies**

    - Controlled ignition operations were carried out to remove flammable vegetation ahead of the fire's path, creating strategic firebreaks to halt the wildfire's spread.
    - Firebreaks were established in high-priority areas, including near the townsite of Jasper and along key transportation corridors such as Highway 16 and the CN Rail line.

3. **Wildlife and ecosystem protection**

    - Efforts were made to monitor and relocate wildlife from areas at immediate risk. Parks Canada biologists collaborated with the response teams to minimize the long-term impact on the Park's ecosystems.

UNIFIED COMMAND STRUCTURE

The Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada operated under a Unified Command structure, facilitating integrated planning, decision-making, and execution of response efforts. This structure brought together leadership from the Municipality of Jasper, Parks Canada, and other provincial and federal agencies, ensuring clear communication and coordination across all involved entities. By reducing redundancy and enabling efficient resource deployment, the Unified Command structure significantly enhanced the effectiveness of the response. Key elements of the Unified Command included:

1. **Centralized coordination**

    - The Incident Command Post served as the central hub for all planning and operational decisions. Representatives from all participating agencies worked together to prioritize response actions and allocate resources.

2. **Resource sharing and mutual aid**

    - Firefighting crews, equipment, and support resources were pooled from multiple jurisdictions, including other national parks, provincial firefighting teams, Canadian Armed Forces, and international partners.
    - Mutual aid agreements enabled rapid reinforcement from neighboring municipalities and provinces.

3. **Real-time intelligence**

    - Advanced tools, such as satellite imagery and fire behavior modeling, were utilized to track the wildfire's progression and inform tactical decisions.
    - Drone surveillance provided real-time data on fire hotspots and potential threats to infrastructure.

4. **Public and stakeholder engagement**

    - The Unified Command regularly briefed elected officials, community leaders, and stakeholders to keep them informed of the wildfire's status and the response efforts.
    - Dedicated teams managed public information dissemination, through a Joint Information Centre, ensuring consistent and accurate updates.

The Unified Command approach proved vital in managing the complex and fast-evolving crisis. It allowed for a highly coordinated response, maximizing the efficiency of available resources and mitigating the wildfire’s overall impact on the region.



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

KEY FINDINGS

The key emergency management plans of the Municipality included in the review:

1. Municipality of Jasper Emergency Management Bylaw
2. Municipality of Jasper Municipal Emergency Plan (September 2023)
3. Municipality of Jasper Emergency Social Services Plan (December 2023)
4. Municipality of Jasper Emergency Communications Plan (August 2018)
5. Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada Joint Emergency Information Protocol (June 2022)
6. Municipality of Jasper and Jasper National Park Jasper Evacuation Plan (2022)
7. Municipality of Jasper Structure Protection Pre-Plan (2023)

Between the Emergency Management Bylaw, Evacuation Plan, Emergency Social Services (ESS) Plan, and Municipal Emergency Plan (MEP), many of the key aspects of incident management in the Municipality of Jasper are addressed. Considering some of the challenges and opportunities for improvement brought forward in the surveys and workshop, future updates to these plans will help enhance clarity and understanding of roles and responsibilities.

Recommendations related to improvements to these plans are integrated into the recommendations contained in the Themes & Recommendations section of this report.

MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY PLAN

In addition to being a key guiding document for the Municipality, the MEP can be shared with incoming Incident Management Teams (IMTs) to help them understand the processes, operational structure, and roles and responsibilities of different groups that will be involved in incident response and recovery. Some of the information that is recommended for addition into the MEP is contained within some of the other planning documents; however, the MEP is the appropriate overarching plan for inclusion of some of the key information contained in other plans.

1. **Incident Command Post and Emergency Coordination Centre operational and governance structure.** The Municipality of Jasper has indicated through interviews that due to limited resources, it would only be able to staff an Incident Command Post in response to an emergency

within its own community. While an Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) may be established to support incidents occurring in other communities, the determination on when one or both is established and the differences in use is not documented or reflected within the MEP. Clarification within the MEP regarding the planned use of an ICP or ECC is key as well as identifying the triggers for when an ICP or ECC would be established would provide further clarity and guidance to municipal decision makers. In addition, the ICP and ECC operational structures should include the Emergency Advisory Committee to clearly establish the appropriate governance path.

2. **Use of Unified Command.** The Jasper Evacuation Plan addresses instances where Unified Command would be used with Parks Canada, but the MEP does not include reference to the use of Unified Command. The MEP should include triggers for a Unified Command approach, activation, and termination as well as any related processes or structures that would add clarification.

3. **Roles of other levels of government.** The MEP does not clearly describe the roles and responsibilities of provincial and federal government agencies in response and recovery. The Jasper Evacuation Plan addresses the roles of Parks Canada; however, the MEP should clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of each key provincial (Alberta Wildfire, Alberta Emergency Management Agency) and federal (Parks Canada) agency to enable IMT members from incoming assisting agencies to understand the intergovernmental framework in place in Jasper. Additionally, triggers for when Alberta Emergency Management Agency field officers or the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) is engaged or notified should be more clearly defined.

4. **Integration of municipal services and external agencies.** The MEP does not currently reflect how other municipal services and external agencies (including non-governmental organizations, utility, telecommunications partners, etc.) would be integrated into the response framework. While the Emergency Management Bylaw notes that the Director of Emergency Management can invite partners, the MEP should explicitly outline these agencies and their key roles and responsibilities. It should also identify where these entities fit within the operational structure.

5. **Governance roles, responsibilities, and structure.** The MEP should also include clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of municipal government and administration positions during

the activation of the MEP. This includes the Mayor, Council, Chief Administrative Officer, Directors/Managers, and the Emergency Advisory Committee. The plan should also summarize the key roles and responsibilities of the positions within the Incident Command System (ICS). While checklists are provided and offer great detail, a general overview of the responsibilities of each position within the ICS structure will provide better context and understanding for all readers.

6. **Emergency Social Services placement.** The placement of ESS within the operational structure needs to be determined. It is currently noted as a section reporting to the Director of Emergency Management in the ICP model; however, ESS was placed under Operations during the wildfire response. The plan should establish the best position for ESS to ensure optimal coordination and support during emergencies.

7. **Critical infrastructure.** The Structure Protection Pre-Plan outlines key critical infrastructure for the municipality. This critical infrastructure should be included in the MEP itself to ensure awareness by all groups of the facilities and structures that require immediate and special consideration in incident management. It should also detail ownership of each critical infrastructure so appropriate external agencies can be engaged as needed to assist with prevention, preparedness, and protection efforts.

8. **Recovery process and ownership.** The current MEP lacks a discussion of the recovery process and clarity on who owns recovery efforts. It is crucial to establish responsibilities for recovery management. The formation of a separate recovery task force comprised of municipal administration and possibly representatives from other levels of government can ensure a smooth transition to recovery during the incident and a focused and coordinated recovery effort. This task force would oversee the entire recovery process, from initial response to long-term rebuilding and resilience measures. The Jasper Recovery Coordination Centre, developed during the wildfire response, should be formalized and included in recovery planning efforts.

JASPER EVACUATION PLAN

The evacuation plan is very comprehensive and accounts for different zones for evacuation. It clearly sets out the Unified Command with Parks Canada expected to be used in an evacuation scenario, and the processes to be used for evacuating different areas.

1. **Resourcing of evacuations.** The evacuation plan does not identify how evacuation activities will be resourced. Pre-planning around appropriate personnel to complete door-to-door evacuation activities is encouraged to avoid delays in initiating evacuation activities. As demonstrated in the wildfire incident, frontline responders were fully engaged in the incident response itself. As a result, personnel from other municipal or Parks Canada service areas should be considered to perform evacuation activities. Uniformed staff are ideal (i.e. Bylaw staff), but any staff with clear Municipality or Parks Canada identification could be used.

2. **Review of wildfire decision points.** Appendix IV of the evacuation plan establishes trigger points in a wildfire in which evacuation should be considered. As this planning was undertaken in 2022, it should be reviewed again in consideration of the learnings from the 2024 wildfire. In particular, the review should consider whether the risk of ember transfer is relevant and changes or influences the decision points.

3. **Emergency Social Services (ESS) placement.** The placement of ESS within the operational response structure needs to be determined. In the evacuation plan, it is noted as reporting under Operations in an ICP. However, this differs from the ICP model provided in the MEP. The Municipality should determine the most appropriate placement of ESS in a response and ensure consistency across planning.

EMERGENCY SOCIAL SERVICES PLAN

The ESS Plan was detailed and provided clarity regarding roles and responsibilities for individuals involved in the ESS response.

1. **Coordinated external evacuations.** The plan recognized that residents may have to evacuate to another city or town; however, no direction was provided on which cities or towns would be appropriate to direct evacuees. Pre-planning and agreements with the closest appropriate towns or cities is strongly encouraged so clear direction may be provided to residents on where to go as they are evacuating. Consideration should be given for which towns or cities should be used based on the two primary transportation routes out of the town. The Jasper Evacuation Plan notes Hinton and Edmonton as external evacuation centres, but the ESS Plan does not note these or any other locations, and it does not indicate if formal pre-arrangements have been made.

ADDITIONAL PLANS

The Emergency Management Bylaw, Emergency Communications Plan, Joint Emergency Information Protocol, and Structure Protection Pre-Plan were reviewed and found to be sufficient in outlining appropriate authorities, governance, and activities to support the wildfire response and recovery efforts.



STRENGTHS OF THE RESPONSE

Despite the unprecedented scale and intensity of the 2024 Jasper Wildfire Complex, several key strengths were consistently identified across all levels of the response. These strengths were echoed through surveys, workshop discussions, and the analysis of emergency planning documents. The following themes summarize the core capabilities and advantages demonstrated during the wildfire response, offering a foundation for future planning and operations.

1. FIRE MANAGEMENT AND IMPACT MITIGATION

Despite the loss of 32% of structures in the townsite, approximately 68% of Jasper's structures and all critical infrastructure were successfully protected, a very positive outcome under extreme conditions. Several tactical and operational strengths contributed to this success:

- The rapid deployment of structure protection units, including sprinkler systems, was critical to shielding key facilities.
- Effective prioritization of critical assets, including the water treatment plant, power lines, the hospital and other public infrastructure, minimized broader service disruptions and supported the ability for residents and businesses to re-enter the community as quickly as possible.
- The inclusion of local subject matter experts (e.g., water systems and heavy equipment operators) into fire operations ensured that critical infrastructure received appropriate and timely protection.
- Wildland and aerial suppression efforts, particularly by Parks Canada, helped reduce fire spread along key transport corridors and parklands.

2. INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM AND LEADERSHIP

The establishment and activation of a Unified Command structure within hours of ignition demonstrated decisive leadership and strong operational readiness. Notable strengths included:

- Unified Command enabled centralized decision-making and resource coordination across multiple jurisdictions.
- The Incident Management Team (IMT) displayed strong internal clarity and role discipline, especially among senior municipal and Parks Canada officials.

- Leadership remained responsive and adaptive, including the rapid relocation of the IMT and 911/Dispatch to maintain continuity when the townsite became compromised.
- The Incident Commanders maintained clear operational objectives, even amid volatile and evolving conditions, helping maintain responder focus and public trust.
- Leadership exhibited speed and decisiveness, including the rapid declaration of a State of Local Emergency, formal activation of IMT structures, and timely evacuation orders that protected lives and allowed for operational focus during critical early hours of the response.
- The IMT demonstrated exceptional flexibility, seamlessly relocating operations and adjusting strategies in real time as fire behaviour outpaced modelling and threatened key facilities, ensuring continuity of command and uninterrupted response coordination.
- The local Council demonstrated a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities during the emergency, effectively fulfilling their duties and providing timely guidance and support to local emergency managers as needed.

3. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

The response was marked by unprecedented interagency collaboration at the local and federal levels. Specific strengths included:

- The pre-existing Unified Command model between the Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada was activated as designed, providing a solid framework for collaboration.
- Effective mutual aid agreements and inter-jurisdictional support enabled the timely arrival of external firefighting crews, equipment, and Emergency Social Services (ESS).
- National and provincial assets, such as Canada Task Force 2 and the Parks Canada National IMT, were rapidly integrated into operations, reinforcing surge capacity and incident stabilization efforts.
- The workshop highlighted a strong spirit of cooperation and shared mission among partners, even where formal roles or processes were unclear.

4. PEOPLE AND PROCESSES

Human performance and adaptive problem-solving were crucial to the response's success:

- Frontline responders executed under extreme pressure, with reports of high professionalism, adaptability, and teamwork across disciplines.
- Despite the chaos of rapid evacuations, ESS scaled quickly, supporting over 25,000 evacuees with housing, food, and transport logistics.
- The ESS team demonstrated strong adaptability when operations were relocated to Hinton, maintaining service continuity despite the disruption. They also established a satellite operation in Valemount, British Columbia, to support evacuees who had relocated there, despite those residents not receiving the same level of provincial support as those who evacuated to designated Alberta locations.
- Crisis communications efforts, though challenged by circulating rumours of premature fire impingement, still succeeded in delivering timely updates and maintaining regular briefings for the public and elected officials.

5. PREPAREDNESS AND TRAINING

Years of investment in emergency preparedness paid dividends:

- Joint exercises and scenario-based training with Parks Canada prior to the wildfire laid a foundation of trust, role clarity, and operational integration.
- Prior wildfire drills and evacuation planning enhanced community readiness, which contributed to strong public compliance with evacuation orders.
- Plans and checklists embedded in the Municipal Emergency Plan, ESS Plan, and Structure Protection Pre-Plan helped guide tactical decision-making despite the overwhelming nature of the incident.
- Many responders had prior experience with ICS and Unified Command, which allowed them to step into roles more fluidly, even in complex, multi-jurisdictional structures.
- The mobilization of municipal, provincial, and federal partners for post-incident surveys and the AAR process reflected a culture of learning and accountability.
- The high rate of participation in the After-Action Review (AAR) surveys and the AAR in-person workshop demonstrated a strong commitment to continuous improvement, resilience, and professional growth across all responder levels.

THEMES & RECOMMENDATIONS

The themes presented in this After-Action Review reflect a comprehensive analysis of the collective response to the Jasper Wildfire Complex. These themes were developed with careful consideration of the entire Incident Management Team (IMT), which included the Municipality of Jasper as well as numerous external responding agencies, including private sector partners not frequently involved in emergency response. It is crucial to recognize that the observations and recommendations outlined are not intended to single out any one entity but to address systemic opportunities for improvement across all contributing teams.

For the Municipality of Jasper, this includes reviewing the root causes of identified challenges to determine whether the underlying issues stem from internal processes, such as unclear documentation or protocols, or from gaps in understanding, communication, or alignment with incoming teams. By examining these aspects, the Municipality can not only refine its own practices but also enhance its integration with and support for external partners in future incidents. This collaborative approach ensures that the lessons learned benefit all agencies involved, supporting greater cohesion and effectiveness in joint response efforts.

1. STRENGTHENING UNIFIED COMMAND & INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS

Most survey and workshop feedback noted the Unified Command model demonstrated significant strengths, including an overarching and aligned approach to the incident and strong relationships among team members. However, some key issues were also identified. While the Unified Command was deemed effective, triggers to determine when its use is appropriate and how a response would be structured is not included in the MEP. The inclusion, placement, roles, and responsibilities of certain agencies and teams within the IMT and structure were also unclear, including Jasper 911/Dispatch and Emergency Social Services (ESS), which resulted in a lack of communication between the groups. There was also a lack of understanding of what agencies were responsible for the different aspects of re-entry planning.

Emergency management planning in the Municipality should also include a re-entry plan that identifies the critical steps and resources and outlines agency roles and responsibilities to help expedite decision-making processes and the return of residents and businesses to the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Clear guidelines regarding integration of critical services:** Establish clear guidelines within the MEP that define the responsibilities and reporting structure of key municipal services (including ESS) and Parks Canada services (including 911/Dispatch) within the IMT.

2. **Use of Unified Command:** Within the MEP, include guidelines on the use of, and triggers for, employing a Unified Command structure during incidents to ensure coordinated and effective response efforts.

3. **Re-entry planning:** Develop a comprehensive re-entry plan that outlines critical steps, trigger points, resources, and agency roles to expedite decision-making and facilitate the return of residents and businesses.

2. FORMALIZING EXTERNAL AGENCY REPRESENTATION

Workshop feedback highlighted the expertise and resources of external agencies – many of which operate in the private sector – as valuable assets in incident response. For a number of external agency representatives, participation in the wildfire response was new, and some were unfamiliar with how to work within the response and provide and access information to support the emergency efforts. Little formal guidance exists for representatives to determine how to structure their organizations and personnel to provide future support to IMTs, resulting in not enough trained staff available to support a multi-day incident.

Going forward, the Municipality's emergency management program must outline how external agency partners are represented and utilized during an incident. Establishing a framework for their engagement, participation, and learning will enhance their planning, readiness, and effectiveness. External agencies can also bring prevention, mitigation, and preparedness learnings back to their organizations to facilitate resilience in their own infrastructure and operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. **Framework for engagement:** Create a framework for the engagement and participation of external agencies in incident response. This should include guidelines for their roles, responsibilities, and integration into the IMT and should be incorporated into the MEP.

5. **Multi-agency scenario-based ICS training:** Conduct regular, multi-agency training sessions that focus on ICS structure, role responsibilities, and real-time coordination exercises to improve cross-agency collaboration and response efficiency.

3. DELINEATING JURISDICTIONS & AUTHORITIES

The response to the Jasper Wildfire Complex demonstrated the effectiveness of the strong Unified Command established by the Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada. Provincial involvement added complexity to the response, as the Province of Alberta, though not jurisdictionally responsible to lead the incident, regularly requested information and sought to exercise decision-making authority. While Alberta Wildfire actively supported firefighting operations and participated in the IMT, jurisdictional overlap with the Province created political challenges that disrupted the focus of Incident Commanders, leading to time spent managing inquiries and issues instead of directing the wildfire response and re-entry.

The Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) plays a crucial role in fostering preparedness and operational efficiency for responders during large-scale incidents. A key area of influence of the Province is ensuring responders are equipped with strong Incident Command System (ICS) knowledge and positional-based skills. However, findings from the workshop and surveys indicated gaps in role clarity and use of standardized procedures contributed to some fragmented authority, duplication of efforts, and inconsistent application of ICS protocols. Feedback from participants highlighted both the value and challenges of implementing ICS in multi-agency emergency responses. While ICS provides a structured approach to incident management, variations in understanding, inconsistent application across agencies, and unclear role definitions led to coordination challenges, decision-making inefficiencies, and tactical delays. Consistent, ongoing training on ICS is key to building and maintaining capacity and capability across the province to help supporting agencies effectively support emergencies in other jurisdictions.

AEMA also holds a critical role in resource management and tracking, as it mobilizes resources on behalf of municipalities during large incidents. Despite this, challenges were identified, including inefficiencies in signing in, tracking, and checking out resources. These issues resulted in a lack of awareness regarding resource availability and location, which contributed to confusion, increased safety risks, and hindered effective allocation of resources. Improved resource management processes are essential for enhancing the Province's capacity to support municipalities in such emergencies.

Future incident management should reflect pre-established clarity in roles, jurisdictions, and authorities that are housed within the MEP to avoid future complications. Developing formal agreements and communication protocols between the Municipality of Jasper, Parks Canada, and key provincial agencies in advance can help define leadership responsibilities and decision-making processes more effectively. This will ensure that invited agencies, such as Alberta Wildfire, can contribute operational expertise while maintaining the integrity and authorities of the Unified Command structure. Further, the Municipality of Jasper should advocate for AEMA to enhance responder readiness through expanded training initiatives that emphasize ICS proficiency and positional-based skills. This advocacy can further extend to seeking improved processes for resource tracking and management, particularly during the early stages of an incident, which are vital to ensuring situational awareness and the safe, efficient allocation of resources. By promoting collaborative alignment, clear jurisdictional boundaries, and common incident and resource management approaches, all partners will be better positioned to work cohesively and optimize their emergency response efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. **Clarify provincial expectations and jurisdictional concerns:** Working from existing legislation and authorities, meet with Parks Canada, and appropriate Government of Canada and Province of Alberta representatives to discuss and resolve challenges identified during the wildfire, clarifying pertinent provincial and federal agency jurisdictions and responsibilities within the MEP.

7. **Advocate for resource optimization and expanded standardized training:** Advocate to the AEMA for:

    a. Review of Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre resource allocation processes to enhance dependability and reliability.

    b. Implementation of a resource deployment pre-alerting system to support more rapid response and a robust resource tracking system that allows for real-time updates on the availability and location of resources.

    c. Bolstering education and awareness of ICS and positional training across all responding organizations, to enhance interoperability and consistency during incidents.

4. ADVANCING FIRE OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Jasper's Structure Protection Pre-Plan and operational plans, adapted as the incident progressed, played a significant role in saving approximately 68% of the townsite structures and protecting all critical infrastructure. Workshop participants noted that the inclusion of municipal water subject matter experts and heavy equipment operators with Fire Operations were vital to successfully managing the fire within town limits. However, challenges arose when some incoming structural fire crews were unable to use hydrants due to incompatible couplings, and although planning had accounted for ember ignitions, the wildfire produced multiple, simultaneous ignitions across the municipality as a result of widespread ember showers. Some participants noted that ember shower planning appeared limited or unclear during the response, though this may have been due to the scale and speed of simultaneous ignitions, which made it difficult to discern what plans were being implemented in real time. Similarly, while several responders reported a lack of compatible hydrant couplings, the Municipality has indicated since the workshop that it believes a sufficient supply was available on the night of the fire impingement into the townsite, though access may have varied in the days that followed.

Continuing to enhance community resiliency to fire spread remains essential. Development and fire planning that considers various modes of fire ignition within the municipality should be considered, as should encouraging pre-engineering of critical infrastructure to improve fire protection. Integrating different agencies and resources into fire operations planning and management will ensure crucial resources are readily available at the outset of an incident.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. **Equipment compatibility:** Ensure that all incoming structural fire crews are equipped with compatible tools to use local resources effectively.
9. **Comprehensive fire planning:** Review fire plans to ensure they address various modes of fire ignition, including multiple, simultaneous, and widespread ember showers, and integrate these plans into the overall operational strategy.
10. **Pre-engineering of critical infrastructure:** Integrate critical infrastructure into the MEP and encourage owners of critical infrastructure to employ pre-engineering and pre-planning to improve fire protection and enhance community resilience to fire spread.

5. OPTIMIZING COMMUNICATION & RESOURCE PLANNING

Effective communication is fundamental to emergency response operations, yet during the Jasper Wildfire Complex, gaps in information flow created inefficiencies. Firefighters frequently struggled to receive timely updates on incident action plans and operational objectives, leading to delays in tactical decision-making. Workshop feedback further highlighted inconsistencies in communication from the IMT to frontline responders, with leaders independently translating and filtering information. Additionally, the coordination between structural and wildland firefighting operations was hampered by differing priorities, causing confusion during critical moments, particularly when wildland crews withdrew as the fire impinged on the town site without clearly communicated directives for structural firefighters.

Resource availability also posed challenges that impacted both responder performance and incident management. IMT members experienced shortages of essential tools, such as communication devices and mapping resources, disrupting strategic planning efforts. Limited information technology support and a lack of shared systems further hindered decision-making and collaboration. Logistical challenges associated with Jasper's remote location exacerbated resource delays, while responders reported inadequate sleeping arrangements, restricted access to nutritious meals, and insufficient rest areas, all factors affecting morale and effectiveness. Safety risks were further heightened by deficiencies in critical equipment, including AFRRCS radios, limited radio channels, and insufficient personal protective equipment for frontline staff.

To improve future wildfire response efforts, planning must incorporate comprehensive pre-deployment resource assessments and contingency plans to mitigate delays and shortages. Strengthening logistical support, ensuring adequate food, rest, and operational tools, will enhance responder effectiveness. Additionally, prioritizing clearer briefing protocols, integrating advanced communication tools, and standardizing terminology across agencies will foster improved coordination. By addressing these challenges proactively, emergency response operations can become more cohesive, efficient, and adaptive, ensuring both responder safety and operational success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. **Improved briefing protocols:** Enhance, and train on, briefing protocols, to ensure that all responders, including both structural and wildland firefighting operations, clearly understand incident action plans and operational objectives. Use standardized formats and checklists.

12. **Set expectations for incoming resources:** Work with the AEMA and incident Liaison Officers to determine what guidance can be provided to incoming teams and individuals to ensure they arrive with the necessary resources and the appropriate level of self-sufficiency to sustain themselves for a 72-hour period.

13. **Conduct capability planning:** To facilitate rapid deployment of additional resources to an incident, confirm the provincial resource deployment process and complete a wildfire resource assessment that identifies existing resources, including mutual aid capabilities, and what will be required for a worst-case scenario to create a proactive resourcing plan to drive resource requests in the initial stages of an incident.

6. EXPANDING PLANNING, TRAINING, & EXERCISES

Joint exercises with Parks Canada before the wildfire were instrumental in clarifying roles and responsibilities within the Unified Command structure, contributing significantly to the success of the incident management model. Strong pre-existing relationships between the Municipality and Parks Canada, along with effective planning, enabled the IMT to mobilize and act quickly. However, not all agencies and groups involved in the wildfire response had trained or exercised with the Municipality before, and the range of experience among frontline responders and IMT members varied, with some lacking experience in incidents of similar scale and scope. Workshop participants identified that, given the changing nature of wildfires over the past few years, planning and preparation across the province needs to be based on worst-case scenarios to ensure resources and training are appropriately geared towards larger incidents. Worst-case scenario planning also needs to include being able to scale up the emergency response to manage the scope of the incident appropriately.

Expanding joint training and exercises to include all relevant agencies and groups will ensure a more cohesive and integrated response. Conducting regular practice and tabletop exercises, including those that incorporate worst-case scenarios and extreme conditions, with mutual aid and other partners, will improve preparedness for larger, broader ranges of scenarios. Municipal emergency planning needs to reflect the planned use of only an Incident Command Post (ICP) to manage incidents. Integration of IMT responsibilities into municipal staff job descriptions as well as further training and mentorship opportunities for staff who are expected to assume these positions will ensure that local personnel are prepared for roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. **Incorporate worst-case scenario planning.** Review Appendix IV of the Jasper Evacuation Plan to determine if modifications are required to ensure worst-case scenario planning is included to ensure resources and training are geared toward larger incidents.

15. **Strengthen municipal emergency response readiness.** Establish clear activation protocols for the ICP and ECC within the MEP and integrate IMT responsibilities into relevant staff job descriptions supported by appropriate training and mentorship.

7. REFINING MUNICIPAL & COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS & RESILIENCE

In the workshop, participants noted Jasper businesses and residents seemed ready as the incident impacted their community, due in large part to ongoing emergency preparedness efforts by the Municipality. The elevated level of compliance with evacuation orders ensured the safe evacuation of all residents, while the swift establishment of reception centers in Grande Prairie, Edmonton, and Calgary ensured evacuees were cared for in well-resourced hosting communities. Emergency Social Services remained adaptable and established a satellite operation in Valemount, British Columbia, to support evacuees who had relocated there. However, the incident also highlighted areas for improvement, including the impact of mandatory evacuations on emergency responders, the need for enhanced community resilience, and opportunities to strengthen mutual aid agreements to support evacuees, particularly in the event of inter-provincial evacuations.

The mandatory evacuation orders created complex challenges for emergency personnel, including first responders, municipal staff, and 911/Dispatch call takers. The ability to continue operations must be balanced with safety concerns, particularly when responders are managing the incident while their own homes and families are at risk. Without clear protocols and contingency plans, evacuations could disrupt essential services, create staffing shortages, and increase stress for those remaining operational.

At the community level, Jasper's proactive preparedness efforts and strong compliance with evacuation orders contributed to a well-managed response. Despite preparedness efforts, however, some community vulnerabilities were noted by workshop participants, particularly related to wood shakes on homes and inconsistent levels of FireSmarting undertaken by private homeowners. Enhancing community-wide fire prevention efforts is essential to reducing fire spread within the town, including enhancing building codes and encouraging local industry and homeowners to extend their FireSmart efforts. Formalizing relationships with other communities to support the care of evacuees will ensure timely and efficient care for residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. **Refine evacuation planning:** Develop mutual aid or pre-established agreements with other jurisdictions in both Alberta and British Columbia to house evacuees and identify non-fire personnel resources to execute door-to-door evacuation notification.

17. **Advocate for revised Building Code**: Lobby provincial and national partners to review and update building codes to require housing materials that reduce fire spread, considering both flame fronts and ember showers.

18. **Mandate FireSmart initiatives:** Explore the possibility of developing a bylaw requiring local industry and homeowners to implement FireSmart principles and practices and evaluate the potential to provide supports or incentives to increase participation.

19. **Establish clear evacuation protocols and contingency plans for emergency personnel:** Create formal policies and evacuation protocols for emergency personnel, including exemption criteria, contingency plans, and alternative work locations and staffing strategies, to ensure continuity of critical functions like 911/Dispatch, IMT, municipal governance, and emergency operations during municipal evacuations.

8. EXTENDING SUPPORTS FOR MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

The psychological toll of responding to a large-scale wildfire was a significant concern across both groups of respondents. While mental health resources were brought in early in the response, some groups and individuals may not have been aware of their availability. The surveys revealed that some firefighters and IMT members perceived the mental health resources provided during and after deployment in their home agency as either insufficient or difficult to access. The high-stress nature of wildfire response, coupled with prolonged exposure to dangerous conditions and the emotional strain of witnessing destruction, underscores the critical need for enhanced mental health support systems.

Future wildfire responses should continue to emphasize the importance of mental health care by offering immediate access to counselling services in the field, promoting peer support networks, and incorporating structured debriefing sessions post-deployment. Recurring inclusion of this information in all briefings and communications to responders is essential to ensure awareness of the programs and resources available. A proactive approach to mental health will help responders manage stress effectively and recover more quickly after intense assignments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

20. **Clearly and frequently communicate available mental health supports:** Continue to provide immediate access to counselling services in the field and regularly communicate how to obtain these services to support responders' mental health during deployment. Promote the importance of ongoing mental health care by encouraging responding agencies to extend support for deployed members beyond their activation period.
21. **Leverage peer support networks:** Promote the utilization of existing peer support networks from all involved frontline agencies to offer emotional support and stress management resources for responders.

9. ENHANCING DEMOBILIZATION & POST-DEPLOYMENT SUPPORT

The surveys also highlighted concerns related to the demobilization process and the availability of post-deployment support. Some respondents felt that the demobilization process lacked clarity and efficiency, resulting in logistical bottlenecks and delays in returning personnel to their home agencies. Additionally, there were reports of insufficient follow-up support, such as debriefing sessions and access to resources for mental and emotional well-being from their home agency.

Improving demobilization protocols with structured planning, clear timelines, and efficient transportation logistics will help ensure a smoother transition for responders. Post-deployment processes should also include follow-up check-ins, access to mental health resources, and support for reintegration into professional and personal life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

22. **Devise structured demobilization planning:** Develop clear and structured demobilization protocols within the MEP that include positional responsibilities and efficient transportation logistics to ensure a smooth transition for responders.
23. **Build continuous improvement into planning:** Formalize the requirement for debriefing and after-action reviews following incidents into the MEP to ensure platforms are in place for feedback and reflection.



In memory of MORGAN KITCHEN

Morgan Kitchen, a 24-year-old wildland firefighter from Calgary, Alberta, tragically lost his life while battling the Jasper wildfires on August 3, 2024. Morgan was struck by a falling tree while fighting the blaze northeast of Jasper, demonstrating his unwavering commitment to protecting the community.

Morgan was known for his bold personality, sense of humor, and adventurous spirit. He was a talented athlete, musician, and actor, and his colleagues and friends fondly remembered him for his infectious joy and the positive energy he brought to every situation.

Morgan's dedication to service extended beyond firefighting; he also served as an infantry private with the Calgary Highlanders in the Canadian Armed Forces.

His loss is deeply felt by his family, friends, and the firefighting community. Morgan's bravery and selflessness in the face of danger exemplify the highest standards of public service. His memory will continue to inspire those who knew him and those who learn of his heroic actions.

GLOSSARY

AEMA: Alberta Emergency Management Agency

Under the Alberta Emergency Management Act, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency leads the coordination and co-operation of all organizations involved in emergencies and disasters.

ECC: Emergency Coordination Centre

A designated facility established by the Municipality of Jasper to coordinate the overall response and support to an emergency. It serves as the main point of contact for communication and resource coordination during incidents.

ESS: Emergency Social Services

An emergency response program provided by the Municipality of Jasper that provides short-term services to individuals impacted by a disaster or emergency.

ICP: Incident Command Post

A temporary location or facility designated by the Municipality of Jasper that signifies the physical location of the tactical-level, on-scene incident command and management organization.

ICS: Incident Command System

A standardized approach to the command, control, and coordination of emergency response.

IMT: Incident Management Team

A group of individuals responsible for managing and responding to any incidents or emergencies that may occur.

MEP: Municipal Emergency Plan

The document for the Municipality of Jasper that outlines the structure and operations of the municipal organization in response to emergencies.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY AND WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY

QUALITATIVE SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Survey design and purpose. Two distinct surveys were developed to gather feedback from:

1. **Incident Management Team (IMT) members:** Focused on those involved in the planning, coordination, and oversight of response activities.

2. **Firefighting personnel:** Specifically designed for individuals directly engaged in firefighting (protection or suppression) efforts within the Jasper townsite.

The primary aim of these surveys was to capture a detailed understanding of the operational and strategic elements of the wildfire response. The data gathered was intended to:

- Highlight challenges and successes encountered during the incident.
- Provide actionable insights to enhance coordination, resource allocation, and decision-making for future wildfire events.
- Assess inter-agency collaboration, operational efficiency, and the effectiveness of communication and safety protocols.

Survey development. The surveys were created in consultation with an Advisory Group comprising representatives from the Municipality of Jasper and Parks Canada. This ensured that the survey questions were relevant, comprehensive, and aligned with the objectives of the After-Action Review. The surveys were divided into six key sections:

1. **Demographic information:** Categorized respondents based on their role, experience, and background.
2. **Pre-deployment experiences:** Evaluated preparedness, training, and initial communication efforts.
3. **On-deployment experiences:** Assessed the clarity of briefings, resource availability, command structures, and operational challenges.
4. **Health, safety, and well-being:** Focused on safety measures, mental health resources, and overall well-being during deployment.
5. **Post-deployment experiences:** Examined demobilization processes, aftercare, and reintegration experiences.

6. **Opportunities and overall feedback:** Provided an open platform for respondents to share suggestions and comments.

The survey included a mix of multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended questions to allow for both quantitative analysis and qualitative insights. To encourage candid and honest responses, all submissions were collected anonymously.

Survey administration. The surveys were conducted over a three-week period, from January 20 to February 12, 2025. An online link was sent to responding agencies involved in the Jasper Wildfire Complex incident, with instructions to forward the invitation to their members who participated as IMT personnel or firefighting resources. A reminder email was sent on January 28, 2025, to encourage participation, and weekly reports were generated to monitor engagement levels.

Participation and engagement. The firefighter survey received 138 responses, while the IMT survey collected data from 115 participants. The high completion rates (meaning that the number of respondents who started the survey and answered all the questions), 73% for firefighters and 78% for IMT members, indicated a strong commitment to the process. On average:

- Firefighter respondents spent 22 minutes and 21 seconds completing the survey.
- IMT respondents spent 27 minutes and 38 seconds on the survey.

This level of engagement highlighted the participants' dedication to contributing meaningful insights into the review process.

Respondent's demographics and experience. Survey participants represented a broad spectrum of experience levels:

- Among firefighters, respondents included both structural and wildland specialists, ranging from new recruits to seasoned veterans with decades of service.
- IMT members included individuals with varied tenure on IMTs, offering perspectives from both experienced professionals and those newer to the role.

Additionally, respondents reported differing lengths of deployment, with some stationed on-site for only a few days and others remaining for extended periods to support suppression efforts and logistical operations.

PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY

Workshop design and purpose. On February 6, 2025, the Municipality of Jasper hosted a full-day, in-person workshop attended by 68 individuals from municipal, provincial, and federal agencies (see Appendix B) directly involved in the response to the wildfire. The group was presented with a timeline of the incident and the results of the surveys to set the stage for smaller group conversations. The large group was then divided into three smaller groups based on their functions during the response, allowing for manageable, productive discussions among participants with similar positions:

1. **IMT:** Individuals involved in the planning, coordination, and oversight of response activities.
2. **Operations:** Personnel directly engaged in fire suppression efforts within the town of Jasper.
3. **External agencies:** Representatives from organizations and entities outside of the municipal government that provide support during emergencies.

The primary aim of the workshop was to engage in open, honest, and professional discussion of the incident to learn what went well and what could have gone better. The feedback gathered was intended to:

- Expand upon and validate results from the two surveys.
- Validate and verify the timeline of the incident as provided by the Municipality of Jasper.
- Evaluate the strengths and opportunities for improvement related to the response.
- Identify the best practices, lessons learned, and recommended actions to be applied to future emergency incidents.

Workshop development. The workshop format followed Parks Canada's Wildfire Management After-Action Review model (2020) to ensure that the discussion questions were relevant, comprehensive, and aligned with the standardized approach. The workshop was divided into four sessions to reflect the key areas with the Parks Canada After-Action Review model:

1. What was planned?
2. What actually happened?
3. Why did it happen?
4. What did we learn?

The sessions involved 30 to 45 minute facilitated conversations within the three smaller groups, with each group documenting its feedback on flipcharts. At the end of the sessions, facilitators reported back to the larger initial group on results from the smaller group sessions. All feedback was amalgamated from team input, so no individual responses were identified to protect confidentiality.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

Agencies that attended the workshop held February 6, 2025, included:

- Alberta Emergency Management Agency
    - Emergency Social Services
    - Field Officers
    - Regional Field Operations
    - Training, Certifications, and Standards
    - Wildland Urban Interface Program
- Alberta Environment
- Alberta Health Services
- Alberta Wildfire
- ATCO Electric
- ATCO Gas
- Canada Task Force 2
- Canadian Red Cross
- City of Grand Prairie Fire Department
- Clearwater County Fire Department
- CN Rail
- Grande Cache Fire Department
- Grande Prairie County Fire Department
- High River Fire Department
- High Level Fire Department
- Hinton Fire Department
- Montane Forest Management
- Municipality of Jasper
    - Chief Administrative Officer
    - Jasper Incident Management Team
    - Jasper Fire Department
- Lac Ste. Anne County Fire Department
- Lakeland College Fire Department
- Parkland County Fire Department
- Parks Canada
    - Dispatch
    - Jasper Field Unit
    - National Incident Management Team
- Recovery Alberta
- Saracen Fire
- Slave Lake Fire Department
- Team Rubicon
- Tourism Jasper
- Town of Drayton Valley
- Town of Edson Fire Department
- Trans Mountain Pipeline
- Whitecourt Fire Department
- Yellowhead County Fire Department

APPENDIX C: MUNICIPALITY OF JASPER INCIDENT CHRONOLOGY

Prepared by the Municipality of Jasper.

Monday, July 22, 2024	
Time	**Event or Action**
19:00	Parks Canada fire crews respond to a wildfire near the transfer station, located approximately 9 km northeast of the Town of Jasper.
19:05	The first south fire was reported. Three ignitions occurred between 1905 and 1908.
19:15	Jasper Fire Department responds to transfer station fire (North fire)
19:15	Initial briefing from Jasper National Park (JNP) Information Officer
19:19	Incident Commander (IC) briefs Agency Administrator of highly visible wildfire near the transfer station.
19:30	RCMP requests assistance to help evacuate Athabasca Falls Hostel.
19:41	ATCO Electric is notified of the North wildfire threatening the power line to Jasper.
20:00	IC activates municipal Incident Management Team (IMT) to report at the Incident Command Post (ICP).
20:08	Municipality of Jasper (MoJ) and JNP Fire agree that an Evacuation Alert is required due to multiple wildfires in the three-valley confluence. Unified Command for the evacuation portion of the incident is initiated.
20:15	IC relocates to JNP Compound.
20:28	Evacuation Alert issued by the Municipality of Jasper for the Town of Jasper and Jasper National Park.
20:45	CN westward train is detained; Highway 16 is closed in both directions.
20:50	The JNP Fire returns from flight over south fires and briefs the IMT leadership from both agencies that Kerkeslin Fire is already over 100 hectares. A consensus rapidly builds that an Evacuation Order for both the Town and the Park is required.
20:55	Fire Chief arrives at JNP Compound; after a short briefing from IC, the directive to issue and Evacuation Order is confirmed.
21:00	Jasper Fire Department crews are back at the station from the North fire and are beginning to implement the MoJ's structural protection plan.
21:08	IC notifies the CAO to assemble the Emergency Advisory Committee to declare a State of Local Emergency.
21:11	IC first contact with Northwest All Hazards Incident Management Team.
21:40	The Municipality of Jasper declares State of Local Emergency.
21:59	The Municipality of Jasper issues Evacuation Order for the Town of Jasper and Jasper National Park. All residents and visitors are directed to travel west on Highway 16 towards British Columbia.
22:00	Assembly Points are activated, including the Jasper Activity Centre.

23:30	Evacuation Centres established in Grande Prairie and Calgary. The Village of Valemount also provides supports for evacuees.
23:40	The first Unified Command PPOST (Priorities, Problems, Objectives, Strategies, Tactics) and basic public messaging are complete. Problems include gridlock, fueling, vulnerable persons, power outage, access to supplies and essential services, confirming properties are clear/evacuated, and incident personnel safety. The decision is made to wait until morning to send the RCMP door knocking in town. Objectives: 1. Assess escorted reopening of Highway 16 East by 12:00am (midnight). 2. Evacuate (clear) the town and surrounding area by 0800. 3. Vulnerable persons escorted and moved from town by 0800 to the east. 4. Restore power or have power stabilized to the Waste Water Treatment Plant by 1200 on July 23. 5. Knock on doors in all evacuation zones starting at 0800 on July 23. 6. Assemble the personnel list required to complete JNP backcountry evacuation by 0800. 7. Commit to and start providing information updates regularly.
23:43	The first notification was issued by the Northwest AHIMT for additional IMT personnel required in Jasper.

Tuesday, July 23, 2024	
Time	**Event or Action**
01:30	Last pick up at Assembly Points, people now directed to the Activity Centre for assistance if required.
03:00	Jasper Fire Department firefighters stop setting up structural protection for the night.
04:00	IC approves Mandatory Evacuation Notice to be printed and distributed by the RCMP while door knocking.
04:53	IC discussion with BC provincial duty manager. A growing number of people are stranded in Valemount without further transportation.
First light	Evacuation of backcountry begins for those not already evacuated.
07:30	• Operations Briefing at the Incident Command Post (ICP). • Several mutual aid partners traveled to Jasper overnight and reported for duty at the ICP in the morning. • Structural and wildland firefighters, crew leaders, IMT staff, Agency Reps, including Alberta Wildfire and Alberta Emergency Management Agency field officers, are on-site supporting the Unified Command response. • Additional resources continue to be requested to come and assist.

08:00	Unified Command for both the evacuation and the wildfire is initiated. Unified Command completes a PPOST. The Objectives include: • Identify and evacuate impacted populations in Jasper National Park; • Maintain staffed access control of the evacuation area; • Stabilize power supply to water, radio, and cellular infrastructure; • Complete structural protection deployment on the townsite and Jasper Park Lodge; and • Limit fire impingement towards town and Highway 16.
09:14	• Resource request for additional fire engines, water tenders and associated crews to be deployed to Jasper to protect the town site submitted to the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre.
Throughout the day	• Parks Canada national IMT travelling to Jasper. • RCMP door knocking and interacting with the very few residents who did not evacuate. Strong compliance rate. • Personnel resources requested through the Northwest AHIMT start arriving at the Incident Command Post. • Structural firefighters continue to set up structural protection in and around town.
17:15	Command and General Staff meeting to determine overnight safety directives for incident personnel.
19:00	Jasper Fire Department firefighters and mutual aid partners stop setting up structural protection for the night.
21:53	Rumours of the wildfire impinging town are rampant; a number of essential staff and assisting agency personnel self-evacuate.
22:00	MoJ and JNP Incident Command identify the source of the misinformation.

Wednesday, July 24, 2024	
Time	**Event or Action**
08:00	Operations Briefing at the ICP.
08:00	Parks Canada National IMT is on site at the ICP, preparing for transition.
08:30	IC briefs CAO and Superintendent on the need to move IMT members to a remote location, including Jasper Dispatch.
09:00	IC calls for additional help to deploy as Deputy IC.
10:00	Unified Commanders (UC) discuss transition issues with the incoming National IMT from Parks Canada.
10:30	Command and General Staff meeting to relocate IMT staff and Jasper Dispatch.
13:57	Direction issued by UC to close the Activity Centre and relocate Emergency Support Services (ESS) staff to Hinton.
14:00	Strategy meeting. UC approves the shelter in place messaging to remaining IMT staff. UC approves an update to Agency Administrators. The Strategy meeting ends abruptly when the wildfire can be seen barrelling over the

	slopes Signal Mountain from the second storey breakout room at the Jasper Fire Hall (ICP). IMT staff who are not required to be physically in Jasper are directed to relocate to Hinton immediately.
17:30	Red skies and windy at the Incident Command Post (fire hall).
17:33	Black/red skies in town.
17:40	The South fire column, filled with burning materials, is forced down to the ground (collapse).
17:43	The wildfire has passed the high-volume sprinkler line setup south of town.
17:48	Embers falling at the Incident Command Post (fire hall).
18:00	The first structural fires are reported. The south end of town (Sleepy Hollow and S-Block), including vacant parcels of land, are the first to ignite.
18:04	Compound Road is compromised, trees are down.
18:06	First confirmed commercial property fully involved.
18:15	Additional structure fires are consistently reported on south end of town.
18:19	Explosions are reported at the gas station.
18:30	Several structures are fully involved in the west end of town and in the industrial area. Deciduous trees are on fire on Snape's Hill.
18:48	Deputy Operations Section Chief (OSC) calls for additional structural firefighting crews to come relieve current crews.
18:50	Several structures are fully involved in the middle of town.
19:07	A second gas station is on fire and threatening to spread to other commercial buildings downtown. Heavy equipment is requested to demolish structures and protect downtown.
19:15	A crown fire is reported on the Pyramid bench (behind town) behind the RCMP detachment.
19:15	The decision is made to call Canada Task Force 2 to deploy for assistance.
19:20	Structure fires reported on the 700-block of Patricia Street and on Tonquin Street. Full conflagration in Cabin Creek West.
19:25	IC and Deputy OSC determine that damage assessments will be required, and re-entry planning must get underway.
19:40	UCs provide an update to Agency Administrators (JNP Superintendent and Senior Strategic Advisor; MoJ Mayor and CAO).
20:15	The remaining IMT staff and wildland personnel who are not directly involved in structural firefighting relocate to Hinton due to poor air quality at the ICP.
21:00	Fire Chief assumes Command of the incident in Jasper.
21:30	Buildings located in the central business district are demolished to prevent further spread in the downtown core.

Thursday, July 25, 2024	
Time	**Event or Action**
03:30	Jasper Fire Department firefighters leave town to Hinton as other crews are in Jasper to relieve them.

05:00	Fire Chief transfers operational leadership to the incoming crew.
06:00	Canada Task Force 2 staff are at the ICP in Hinton to get briefed on the incident.
08:00	Command and General Staff, and Jasper incident staff, meet at the ICP in Hinton.
08:50	Transfer of Command to Canada Task Force 2. Priorities: • Life safety • Relieving and providing support to responders in Jasper • Rapid Damage Assessment • Emergency Support Services (ESS) plan • Maintaining Unified Command • Review of current objectives